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Symposium on Television Violence  
Colloque sur la violence à la télévision





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# **Symposium on television violence** **Colloque sur la violence à la télévision**

Organized by the Research Branch,  
Canadian Radio-Television Commission  
Organisé par la Direction de la Recherche,  
Conseil de la radio-télévision canadienne

Donald Gordon Centre for Continuing Education,  
Queen's University, Kingston

24-26 August 1975

24-26 août 1975

Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission  
Conseil de la radiodiffusion et des télécommunications  
canadiennes  
Ottawa 1976



Ministre des Approvisionnementnements et Services Canada 1976

En vente par la poste:

Imprimerie et Edition

Approvisionnementnements et Services Canada,  
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9

ou chez votre libraire.

N° de catalogue BC92-12/1976 Prix: Canada: \$5.00

ISBN 0-660-00517-4 Autre pays: \$6.00

Prix sujet à changement sans avis préalable

Minister of Supply and Services Canada 1976

Available by mail from

Printing and Publishing

Supply and Services Canada,  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S9

or through your bookseller

Catalogue No. BC92-12/1976 Price: Canada: \$5.00

ISBN 0-660-00517-4 Other countries: \$6.00

Price subject to change without notice

Ministre des Approvisionnementnements et Services Canada 1976

Minister of Supply and Services Canada 1976

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# Foreword/ Avant-propos

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In late August 1975, the Research Branch of the then Canadian Radio-Television Commission assembled a diverse group of broadcasters, researchers, government officials, producers, writers, critics, members of the press, and concerned individuals\* to discuss the issue of television violence in the relatively neutral atmosphere of the Donald Gordon Centre for Continuing Education, at Queen's University, Kingston. It was an identifiably Canadian approach, bringing together the critic and the criticized, the regulator and the regulated, the students of the media and the creators of its forms and styles.

The symposium provided no simple solutions to the issue, or easy consensus among its participants. In fact, the quality and variety of presentations and discussions revealed the issue's complexity in Canadian terms. In any case, the meeting was not intended to be a trial with guilt established and wrongdoers held up to ridicule. Its purpose was to broaden traditional perspectives on a difficult issue, to search for neglected causes of television violence within the Canadian system of broadcasting, and to seek broader, more positive and constructive solutions in keeping with Canadian realities.

The violent content of much of North America's television programming has been the subject of public controversy and scientific research for more than fifteen years. Throughout this period there has been disagreement between those who consider violence to be a defensible ingredient in a program's appeal, and those who revile it as both unnecessary and dangerous to society.

However, it is indisputable that television action drama with a high degree of violent content is a staple for television programmers in most parts of the world. Violent action drama is distinguished by a contagious quality that easily crosses cultural frontiers and virtually assures satisfactory audience levels.

But while violence succeeds as popular entertainment, it is also rejected and denounced. Broadcast producers, critics, social scientists, political leaders, and regulators have become alarmed by the growing number of

\* See Appendix 6 for a list of participants.



public complaints and controversies provoked by the medium's seeming preoccupation with physical violence.

While its effects must therefore be considered, it is difficult, and probably quite unnecessary at this stage, to add to the evidence collected by the studies sponsored by the United States Surgeon General. Within the assumptions of the behavioral sciences, the case for believing that televised violence has a certain level of perceptible effect on some human behavior is quite strong. Most behavioral scientists today accept this conclusion. But this is clearly only one aspect of a complex problem.

The CRTC symposium on television violence provided the opportunity to discover seldom-discussed aspects of this phenomenon. In reading this report, one is aware of the extent to which the most powerful medium of our time is an enigma, and how dangerous are the anxieties it could provoke should it remain so poorly understood.

Some areas for media research are relatively unexplored, but are vital to a full understanding of media pathology: for example, the history of art and the popular media; the nature and functions of the television medium; the industrial and economic logic of television production and programming.

It is obvious that we don't know nearly enough about the problems of mechanized production of programming, and although the economic, technological, and logistic aspects of the question are seldom studied, they are surely central to any plausible effort to reduce violent content; perhaps they are at least as important as decades of research into the effects of media violence.

Professors Garth Jowett and Eli Mandel reminded us that all the popular arts have used violence as a thematic staple and as a valid dramatic device; they demonstrate that the problem is certainly not a new one. Jean Basile and Judy LaMarsh underlined the impact of the electronic media's limitless energy, a phenomenon having no equivalent in the theatre, literature, or the plastic arts. Perhaps, as Basile suggested, television intrinsically has an affinity for violence, reflected in such terms as "electronic gun" and "bombardment of electrons" used to describe the process of electronic transmission and reproduction. In any case, television's hunger for images dramatically clashes with man's fragile resources of invention and creation.

The descriptions of the mechanical composition of an episode of "Man-nix," recounted by Ted Kotcheff, and of the erosion of the animated

cartoon, by Ken Sobol, are more than adequate demonstrations of industrial pressures on dramatic creation in television. Details from Les Brown on the tactical role of violent programming in the competitive scheduling practices of the American networks served to reaffirm that we are confronted by a phenomenon so complex that categorical regulation might be, as John Lawrence pointed out, an inadequate means of control, even if we could agree on a definition of "violence" as it relates to a complex industrial art.

In the continuous flow of multi-network programming, the problem for television is not only the eventual reduction or suppression of violent content, but also the replacement of a whole style of programming that many commentators consider detrimental to society. For, not only do we not know enough about the problems of production and programming, but we have also given far too little consideration to possible solutions. Studies into effects of violence and studies of violence in programs are simply not sufficient in themselves; by adding symptom to symptom, we merely document our concerns without approaching solutions.

Since any alternative form of programming must make use of the same industrial techniques and obey the same economic and technical logic, there is a need to invent and create viable new models to replace the stereotyped exploitation of violence. To repeat the advice of Hans Mohr, we must add to the familiar arsenal of rules, self-regulation, codes, and enforcement procedures, the nonadversary means of discussion, clarification, and accountability.

We must also consider positive experiences and purposeful efforts at socially and culturally constructive programming in relation to the problem of televised violence. The trend in children's programming in both Canada and the United States to integrate clearly pro-social material has gone largely unrecognized. In the final analysis some encouragement and reinforcement of such efforts may be the only alternative to the endless debate on violence. And, we must not only consult those who know what they don't like in the media, but also those who know what they like and what is needed—those people who have ideas about escaping the routine and often gratuitously physical modes of industrialized drama, or whose imaginations go beyond the easy apposition of shock images in news reports or documentaries.

It is in this way that our television sets may provide us with the kind of education of the sensibility and the imagination that Northrop Frye brought to the attention of the symposium in his summation. Can we long ignore

his suggestion that television might in fact become the kind of civilizing influence that society needs so desperately?

A la fin du mois d'août 1975, la Direction de la recherche du Conseil de la Radio-Télévision canadienne rassemblait des radiodiffuseurs, des chercheurs, des représentants gouvernementaux, des réalisateurs, des écrivains, des critiques, des journalistes et d'autres personnes intéressées\* pour discuter de la violence présentée à la télévision, dans l'atmosphère somme toute assez neutre du Centre Donald Gordon pour l'éducation permanente de l'université Queen's à Kingston. Au départ, cet effort pour aborder les problèmes de la violence était typiquement canadien, dans la mesure où il cherchait à réunir les critiques et les "critiqués", les organismes de réglementation et les organismes réglementés, les observateurs des moyens de communication et les créateurs des divers formules et genres présentés par les media.

Le colloque ne s'est pas terminé sur un consensus ou par une série de recommandations. Mais la qualité et la variété des exposés et des discussions ont fait mieux comprendre et préciser à quel point, pour les Canadiens, cette question était complexe et difficile à résoudre. Il n'entrait pas dans les intentions de ce colloque de se constituer en tribunal saisissant des coupables et les punissant pour leurs mauvaises actions. La réunion de Kingston visait plutôt à élargir les points de vue traditionnels sur ce sujet épineux. Il s'agissait de mettre en lumière des causes négligées de cette violence que les émissions de télévision diffusent sur notre système de radiodiffusion et de chercher des solutions meilleures et plus constructives qui répondent à la réalité canadienne.

Depuis plus de quinze ans, le caractère violent de nombreuses émissions de la télévision nord-américaine fait l'objet de débats publics et de recherches systématiques. Tout au long de cette période, ceux qui considèrent la violence comme une composante acceptable de la popularité d'une émission et ceux qui la condamnent comme inutile et nuisible à la société n'ont pas cessé de s'affronter.

Il est incontestable que les émissions dramatiques violentes constituent un élément essentiel de la programmation de la majorité des systèmes de télévision à travers le monde. Les émissions violentes semblent posséder une puissance d'attraction quasi magique qui leur permet de franchir facilement les barrières culturelles et leur assure, presque infailliblement, une cote d'écoute confortable.

\*Voir la liste des participants à l'Annexe 5.



Mais, bien que la violence apparaisse comme un élément presque inévitable de divertissement populaire, elle est aussi critiquée et dénoncée. Les réalisateurs d'émissions de télévision, les critiques, les sociologues, les hommes politiques et les responsables de la réglementation s'alarment du nombre croissant de plaintes provenant du public et des controverses provoquées par l'obsession apparente de la télévision pour la violence physique.

Cependant, bien qu'il faille continuer à étudier les effets de la violence, il est difficile et probablement presque superflu, au point où nous sommes, de penser que nous pourrions ajouter quelque chose à de grandes études comme celles que le Bureau de la santé publique des Etats-Unis avait commandées il y a quelques années.

Compte tenu des hypothèses retenues par les sciences du comportement, il nous est possible de croire que la violence présentée à la télévision a des effets sensibles sur le comportement humain. La plupart des spécialistes du comportement acceptent aujourd'hui ces conclusions. Mais ce n'est évidemment qu'un aspect d'un problème complexe. Le colloque du C.R.T.C. sur la violence à la télévision a donné l'occasion de dévoiler certains aspects, rarement discutés, de ces phénomènes. La lecture de ce rapport nous fait mieux comprendre à quel point le moyen de communication le plus puissant de notre époque demeure une énigme pour ses promoteurs et ses usagers et combien sont dangereuses les inquiétudes que provoque ce medium, si l'on continue à le considérer d'une façon un peu superficielle.

Bien qu'essentiels à une compréhension suffisante de la pathologie des moyens de communication, certains secteurs de recherche sont à peu près négligés, qu'ils concernent l'histoire de l'art et des moyens de communications populaires, les caractères fondamentaux de la télévision et son rôle ou encore, la logique industrielle et économique de la réalisation des émissions et de leur programmation.

Il est certain que nous sommes loin d'en savoir assez sur les problèmes de la réalisation mécanisée d'émissions. Et bien que les aspects économiques, technologiques et logistiques de la question ne soient que rarement étudiés, toute tentative valable de réduire la violence des émissions de télévision devra en tenir compte.

En nous remémorant que tous les arts populaires se sont servis de la violence comme thème et comme véhicule dramatique efficace, MM. Garth Jowett et Eli Mandel nous ont rappelé que ce problème n'était certainement pas nouveau. En soulignant l'importance de l'énergie inépuisable des media électroniques, Jean Basile et Judy LaMarsh nous ont montré que nous nous

trouvions devant des phénomènes nouveaux que le théâtre, la littérature et les arts plastiques n'ont pas connus. Peut-être, comme le suggère Basile, la télévision possède-t-elle une affinité essentielle pour la violence, que traduisent des expressions comme "canon électronique" et "bombardement d'électrons", couramment employées pour décrire ses méthodes de transmission et de reproduction électronique. Quoiqu'il en soit, l'avidité de la télévision pour les images dramatiques ne peut qu'entrer en conflit avec les frêles capacités d'invention et de création de l'homme.

La description de la composition mécanique d'un épisode de "Mannix", donnée par Ted Kotcheff, et celle de l'érosion des qualités graphiques et dynamiques des dessins animés, présentée par Ken Sobol, démontrent amplement les résultats des pressions industrielles exercées sur la créativité dramatique à la télévision. Les détails fournis par Les Brown sur le rôle stratégique des émissions de caractère violent en ce qui concerne les pratiques de programmation concurrentielles des réseaux américains ne font que confirmer la complexité du phénomène auquel nous faisons face. Nous pouvons croire, comme l'a d'ailleurs signalé John Lawrence, que des règlements sévères pourraient se révéler inappropriés et inefficaces à supposer que nous réussissions à nous mettre d'accord sur une définition de la "violence" en fonction de cet art industriel complexe.

Dans le flot perpétuel et contraignant d'émissions provenant des divers réseaux, il ne s'agit pas seulement pour la télévision de parvenir à atténuer ou à supprimer la violence des émissions, mais aussi de remplacer un modèle de programmation que de nombreux observateurs considèrent comme néfaste et de lui substituer quelque chose d'autre. De plus, il est évident que non seulement nous ne savons pas assez de choses au sujet des problèmes associés à la réalisation et à la programmation d'émissions violentes, mais que nous n'avons pas, non plus, assez étudié les solutions qu'il est possible d'apporter à ces problèmes. Des études sur les effets de la violence et des études sur la violence des émissions télévisées ne suffisent pas. En accumulant symptômes sur symptômes, nous ne faisons que renforcer notre anxiété sans même essayer d'y apporter des remèdes. Etant donné que toute formule de remplacement en matière de programmation devra employer les mêmes techniques industrielles et répondre à la même logique économique et technique, il est nécessaire d'inventer et de créer de nouveaux modèles viables qui puissent remplacer l'exploitation stéréotypée de la violence. Comme le conseille Hans Mohr, nous devons ajouter à notre arsenal ordinaire de règles, d'auto-réglementation, de codes et des moyens de contrôle, les instruments plus pacifiques que constituent la discussion, les tentatives d'explications et les prises de responsabilités.

Nous devons aussi tenir un compte plus précis des expériences positives et

des efforts orientés vers la réalisation d'émissions constructives du point de vue social et culturel. Les tentatives actuelles de nombreuses émissions pour enfants canadiennes et américaines pour insérer dans leurs programmes des éléments résolument pro-sociaux passent trop souvent inaperçus. Bref, il se pourrait que l'encouragement et l'accroissement de tels efforts soient le seul moyen d'échapper à un débat sans fin sur la violence. Il faudrait non seulement consulter ceux qui savent clairement ce qu'ils ne veulent plus voir sur le petit écran de la télévision mais également ceux qui savent ce qu'ils veulent et ont peut-être une idée de ce qu'il serait possible d'ajouter pour enrichir les programmes, ceux qui peuvent nous aider à échapper à la routine et à la machinerie purement physique d'émissions manufacturées en série, et à dépasser l'exploitation facile d'images choquantes dans laquelle se complaisent les bulletins de nouvelles, les documentaires et les émissions dramatiques.

De cette façon, le téléviseur pourrait nous apporter cette éducation de la sensibilité et de l'imagination dont a parlé Northrop Frye, en tirant quelques premières conclusions de ce colloque. Car il n'est pas sûr que nous pourrions encore très longtemps négliger l'influence civilisatrice que pourrait exercer la télévision, et dont nos sociétés semblent parfois avoir tellement besoin.

Le Directeur général de la recherche, André Martin

Director-General, Research Branch  
Le Directeur général de la recherche  
André Martin





# Introduction

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**Pierre Juneau, Chairman,  
Canadian Radio-Television Commission\***

There is a growing concern in Canadian society about violence in the media. Although the CRTC is very much aware of the problem, the solution has not been so obvious. Everyone is conscious of the hazards any discussion of media content implies—censorship for instance—and of the particularly important problem cable television poses to the Canadian broadcasting environment. We have not excluded the possibility of eventually holding a CRTC public hearing on media violence. But we thought that a more informal gathering, such as this one, would be part of the process of acquiring and developing more knowledge on the subject of violence, and would be more appropriate at this time. Such a meeting gathers people from various sectors, knowledgeable and interested in television and the particular matter of violence in television—people representing the social sciences, the various professional media sectors such as production, writing, criticism, and also people concerned with the economic aspects of broadcasting.

This meeting is not an official CRTC hearing, nor will it lead to any public CRTC decisions. It is rather a forum where we hope people will have a chance to exchange views on the very many complicated aspects of violence and the electronic media.

La société canadienne manifeste une attention croissante sur tout ce qui touche les problèmes de la violence dans les media. Bien que le C.R.T.C. soit pleinement conscient de la gravité de ces symptômes, aucune véritable solution n'a encore été trouvée. Il est évident que toute discussion sur le contenu des media présente des risques et pose des problèmes de censure par exemple. On ne peut oublier que la télévision par câble pose des problèmes de ce type au système de la radiodiffusion canadienne. Nous n'avons pas éliminé la possibilité de tenir une audience publique du C.R.T.C. sur la violence dans les media. Cependant, nous avons pensé qu'un rassemblement moins officiel, comme cette réunion, pourrait nous permettre d'acquérir et d'approfondir des connaissances au sujet de la violence et

\*Since 1 April 1976, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. Mr. Juneau resigned as CRTC Chairman 29 August 1975.

que cela conviendrait mieux pour le moment. Une réunion comme celle-ci permet de regrouper des personnes provenant de divers secteurs, des personnes bien renseignées sur la télévision, particulièrement sur la question de la violence et qui s'intéressent à ce sujet: des représentants du secteur des sciences sociales, des divers secteurs professionnels des media, notamment des producteurs, des écrivains, des critiques, ainsi que des personnes s'occupant de l'aspect économique de la radiodiffusion.

Cette réunion n'est pas une audience officielle du C.R.T.C. et ne sera donc suivie d'aucune décision de la part du Conseil. Il s'agit davantage d'un colloque au cours duquel nous espérons que les participants auront la possibilité d'exprimer leurs opinions et d'échanger leurs idées sur les multiples aspects de la violence dans les media électroniques.

## The public issue

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**Summary:** Public pressure to control violence on television starts with observation of the increasing dangers of contemporary urban life—crime in the streets, juvenile antisocial behavior, and so on—often linked in a causal relationship with excessive and unrepresentative amounts of violence on television screens.

This section of the symposium discussed the impact of violence in a historical perspective, and attempted to clarify in critical terms the function of violence in drama, news, and public affairs.

Garth Jowett provided a brief history of the controversy concerning the social effects of various mass media: literature, motion pictures, and comic books. Colin Low, National Film Board producer, delivered a personal appraisal of the changing use of violence in motion pictures. Two panel discussions, "Critical perspectives on violence as a dramatic convention in the arts and mass media," and "The treatment of violence in information programming," complete the section.

**Résumé:** Les pressions publiques en vue d'éliminer la violence des émissions de télévision commencent par l'observation des dangers croissants qui menacent les citoyens—le crime dans les rues, le comportement antisocial des jeunes, etc.—phénomène souvent lié à un rapport de cause puisqu'il existe un degré de violence extrême et non représentatif dans les émissions de télévision.

La présente partie du colloque a été consacrée à la discussion de l'impact de la violence dans une perspective historique et des tentatives ont été faites en vue de clarifier, en termes critiques, la fonction de la violence dans les émissions dramatiques, dans les émissions de nouvelles et d'affaires publiques.

Garth Jowett a fait un bref historique de la controverse au sujet des effets sociaux des divers mass media: la littérature, les films et les bandes dessinées. Colin Low, réalisateur à l'Office national du film, nous a communiqué son évaluation personnelle de l'utilisation changeante qui est faite de la violence dans les films. Deux discussions en atelier, "Approches critiques de la violence en tant qu'élément de conflit dramatique dans les arts et les mass media" et "La violence dans les émissions d'information" ont occupé le reste du temps de cette partie du colloque.

### A brief history of opinion on the social effects of mass media: Literature, motion pictures, comic books

#### Garth Jowett

Garth Jowett is an associate professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Windsor, and chairman of that university's Centre for Canadian Communication Studies. Mr. Jowett did his undergraduate studies at York University in Toronto and received his doctorate in history and



communications from the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Jowett has published widely in the areas of motion picture history and communications research. His book *Film: The democratic art: A social history of movie going in America* was published in March 1976 (Boston: Little, Brown). He is working on a history of communications.

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There is a tendency for the popular arts to use violence as a thematic staple, and the questions raised by this fact have been with us for a long time. As this gathering demonstrates, they show no signs of being answered in the near future.

There is a great deal of evidence that the content of popular literature was severely criticized for violent content as early as the sixteenth century. The introduction of movable type in the fifteenth century not only encouraged the development of Luther's Reformation, but it was also responsible for the spread of literacy and the subsequent growth of vernacular literature. Production of reading material for the general population, although limited by modern-day standards, was immediately met with the criticism that such literature encouraged and preyed upon mankind's basest instincts.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, fairly elaborate types of reading matter were professionally produced expressly for the working class. Broadsheets and chapbooks had a very high violence content. Many of these "newspapers" depended on sensationalist content. Later, crime stories with all the gory details couched in Victorian euphemism were popular and there was a great deal of criticism concerning the public's seemingly insatiable appetite for this type of story. Canadian newspapers of the period were much more restrained in tone; politics seemed to be the preoccupation of Canadian editors.

After the 1830s, the new steam presses were for the first time making cheap, rapid, quantity printing a possibility; coupled with significant increases in the literacy rate, the result was that American and European markets were flooded with reading matter designed for an urban working class. Most of this fiction featured some form of violence, although American nineteenth century literature was, on the whole, more restrained than the British literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been. Victorian literature in England ranged from the sensationalist broadsheets distributed on the street to the equally popular, and sometimes surprisingly violent, books of Charles Dickens. What popular nineteenth century literature in both countries had in common was a large number of detractors, convinced that such reading matter was responsible for all society's ills.

The movies were the perfect entertainment medium for an increasingly urbanized society, but for some they also represented the most potent social threat. A particularly important fact for the future of the motion picture industry was the mass media's ability to bypass existing social communication channels and authority structures in politics, religion, kinship, and education, and to establish direct contact with the individual. Particularly in education and religion, parents and teachers felt they were powerless to counter the influence of these new communications forms which were so readily accessible to the young. The public's sudden awareness of these new media led to questions about "normal" methods of social control: the mass media seemed to be the most powerful instruments for influencing people yet developed, but it was also apparent that there were no established social or cultural control mechanisms to deal with them.

Very soon after its introduction, the motion picture became the subject of intensive investigation and study. In the years prior to the Second World War literally thousands of such studies were undertaken by many diverse groups, using a wide variety of investigative techniques. The findings they produced confirmed practically every point of view then held on the impact and influence of the medium. While the research methodology and sponsoring agency may have differed on some points, these studies had one overriding consideration—a concern for the power and influence of a medium which, because of its tremendous popularity with the general public, and especially the young, had become an important focal point in the social and cultural life of people throughout the world.

There were three basic problems facing potential investigators. First, they had to define the exact nature of their investigation—which of the many questions posed by the influence of the movies did they hope to investigate? Second, in many cases they had to devise new techniques to acquire their data. Third, once the data were acquired and analyzed, how could their findings be translated into relevant action? Many of these studies succeeded in coming to terms with the first two problems, but seldom with the third.

By far the most important series of motion picture research studies are those known as the Payne Fund Studies, conducted in the four years from 1929 to 1933. The objective of this immense undertaking was "to provide data for answering completely or in part a wide range of separate queries" relating to the effects of motion pictures on the youth of America. The end product was a series of twelve studies published under the generic title, *Motion pictures and youth*, the most comprehensive investigation of a mass medium undertaken anywhere in the world at that time. The

individual studies examined such aspects of the problem as the ability of movies to transmit information and ideas, the effects of movies on children's sleep patterns, the attendance patterns of movie patrons, the role of movies in shaping the conduct and "morality" of children, and even studies of movie content and a volume on how to appreciate movies.

The Payne Fund works which are of most interest to social scientists today are Blumer and Hauser's *Movies, delinquency, and crime*, Peters' *Motion pictures and standards of morality*, Blumer's *Movies and conduct*, and Peterson and Thurstone's work on attitudes and beliefs and the retention of information. While the research methodologies used in these pioneering works do not stand up to close scrutiny today, they were an important breakthrough in the early 1930s and were well received by other social scientists, with, of course, a few dissenting voices.

The book which drew the most fire was Blumer's book, *Movies and conduct*. Blumer employed an autobiographical technique; he had people, including a large number of so-called juvenile delinquents, write diaries about how and what they felt about motion pictures. One example is the response of a seventeen-year-old girl in high school: "Yes, the movies do change my moods. Sometimes when I feel sort of blue and I go see Clara Bow or some other actress I feel like flirting with everybody when I get out of the theatre. I usually feel that way until the next morning, if the picture made an impression on me." Blumer concluded that movies did indeed have a deep and permanent psychological effect on many people, both adults and youths. The motion picture was a rich source for fantasy and imitation, especially for adolescents, and it offered a means of "emotional possession" during the actual performance and even afterwards, which could profoundly influence an individual's conduct and philosophy of life.

More importantly, Blumer's findings (and those of some of other researchers) tended to confirm many of the suspicions which had been voiced by the medium's critics for nearly twenty-five years. He suggested that the content of films was more than just mere entertainment; it was also "authentic portrayals of life, from which [viewers] draw patterns of behavior, stimulation to overt conduct, content for a vigorous life of imagination, and ideas of reality."

Much like the recent U.S. Surgeon General's Report on violence in the mass media, the Payne Fund Studies attempted cautious interpretation of their findings in an attempt to present them as objectively as possible. Unfortunately, the intentions of the researchers were thwarted by the early publication of a popularized summary of the studies, expressly written for public consumption. There is no denying that the studies did have an



underlying but subtle hostility toward the immense socializing influence of the commercial motion picture industry. However the popular summary, *Our movie made children*, written by a journalist, Henry James Forman, was much more blatant. Forman had a decided flair for selecting the most dramatic findings, and a very obvious bias against the film industry. Throughout Forman's book, the emphasis was on those findings in the Payne Studies, and even in earlier studies, which indicated the harmful effects of attendance at the movies. He continually played on the fact that the majority of American films had as their central themes love or sex or crime, or combinations of these. The entire volume was a form of propaganda, which sociologist Kimball Young noted was "evidently stimulated by those supporters of the original research project who felt that the motion pictures constituted a serious menace to public and private morals."

The Forman book caused a mild sensation when it was published, particularly because it was prepared and presented with the full cooperation of the Payne Fund. Given the weight of this authority, the volume had a wide and on the whole favorable reception. It was reprinted at least four times, was reviewed in major literary and popular magazines, and was widely discussed in newspapers. Unfortunately, the publicity tended to obscure the important findings of the studies themselves. This fact was not lost upon many social scientists, who were very careful to distinguish between the studies and Forman's work.

The motion picture industry was obviously disturbed by the published findings of the Payne Fund Studies, and particularly by the public reception of Forman's book. Unfortunately, much of what went on as a result of the studies was behind closed doors, and the information was never made public. The industry did engage the redoubtable Dr. Mortimer Adler to write a refutation called *Art and prudence*, in which he suggested that "scientists" should not and cannot really judge the moral or political consequences of an art form such as motion pictures. Adler's book is almost impossible for the layman to read.

The Payne Fund Studies provided valuable information precisely at a time when the whole issue of movie influence was coming to a head. It had taken over thirty-five years for social science to come to grips with the motion picture, and the publication of the Payne Fund Studies was as much a minor triumph in the development of social science research as it was for those who wanted to know more about the depth of movie influence. However, the application of this intensive research was disappointing, since it was seldom used to formulate policy or social philosophy. Instead, the arguments raging around the motion picture were deflected to the far



more subjective area of moral influence—and it was ultimately the decision of the Roman Catholic Church to combat the “immorality” in the medium that led to a viable form of social control.

The Catholic Church joined the argument because the depiction of content such as adultery, divorce, and various other kinds of behavior was not consistent with Catholic doctrine. Practically every major attempt at censorship was of either sexual or political material, and almost never of violence. In an important but forgotten book written in 1949, Gershon Legman pointed out, “we are faced in our culture by the insurmountable schizophrenic contradiction that sex, which is legal in fact, is a crime on paper, while murder—a crime in fact—is, on paper, the best seller of all time.” Legman was not the first, nor would he be the last, to point out that in North American society violence was far more acceptable than sex. It is only in very recent times that violence separated from sex has become the focus of intensive investigation.

In many ways the problems associated with control of the motion picture were precursors of similar fears about television. The long struggle to make movies more responsive to public demands has been virtually ignored in the new battles about television’s public responsibilities. Unfortunately, research on motion picture influence came to a virtual standstill after 1950, once television became the most pervasive visual medium. After all this time the Payne Fund Studies still stand as one of the major achievements in their field.

In 1954 Joseph McCarthy emerged as a major figure, but in the comic book industry it was also the year of Frederic Wertham. Released in the spring of 1954, Wertham’s *Seduction of the innocent* almost single-handedly caused the comic-book industry to mend its ways, and brought about a U.S. senate investigation. Wertham had been the senior psychiatrist for the Department of Hospitals in New York City for over twenty years, and he had spent a great deal of time examining juvenile delinquents. How much his preoccupation with juveniles colored his thinking is difficult to say, but his book seems to depict all children teetering on the brink of emotional disaster, needing only the influence of some mass medium to nudge them over the edge. While he rarely offers concrete proof of his assertions, the book contains case after case in which he cleverly juxtaposes unpleasant incidents or attitudes with the presence of comic books to suggest causal relationships. It should be pointed out that much of Wertham’s attack was aimed at “crime comics”—a rather specialized form of comic book but one which was immensely popular—even though all comic books were subjected to his

wrath. The industry was forced to yield to intense public pressure and to establish some form of social control.

In 1955 U.S. Senator Estes Kefauver noted in his subcommittee on juvenile delinquency report that the United States "cannot afford the calculated risk involved in the continued mass dissemination of crime and horror comic books to children." However, he flatly rejected all suggestions of government censorship, and noted that primary responsibility lay with the comic-book publishers. In October 1954 the industry reacted in an effort to avoid legislation and created the Comics Code Authority. This was an organization which set up an elaborate if rather vaguely worded list of restrictions with which all subscribing publications were expected to comply. In exchange for this cooperation, the comic books were permitted to display on their covers a seal which read, "Approved by the Comics Code Authority."

For whatever reason, the Code, which had been designed to protect the industry, only succeeded in killing off a number of major series. A comparative handful of companies were left to compete in a fairly substantial market; the rest were either unwilling to change or unable to produce a marketable product within the Code's narrow framework. Lost, even in the surviving comic books, was a certain enthusiasm and the wild imagination which had given the medium most of its finest moments.

There is every reason to be suspicious of the whole comic books controversy. The success of the Code made it relatively easy to squeeze presumably objectionable material off the market without ever having proved it to be illicit or illegal. The Code seal made it all too simple for distributors and dealers to distinguish between "good" and "bad" publications, and thus to defend themselves from harassment by those citizens who had been incited to ill-informed indignation. Violence in comic books was never completely eradicated and since the virtual destruction of the Comics Code in the late 1960s, comic-book content is as violent as ever.

By the 1950s researchers and public had begun to question seriously the impact of television, and since that time the bulk of attention in media impact research has been focused on TV. But we have still not solved all the problems regarding the questions of proper methods of control, nor are we likely to in the immediate future. As long as the economic structure of the mass media requires large, heterogeneous audiences, the problem of media power and public control will exist. Perhaps the only solution lies in greater emphasis on diversity—to cater to the tastes of the many minority interest groups which collectively make up the "mass" audience. Certainly the questions and controversy which surround the issue of

violent content in the mass media need much more thought before we can safely say that we know what role, if any, they have in our society.

## Violence in motion pictures

### Colin Low

Colin Low has been involved in the production of many of the National Film Board's major films. He joined the NFB in 1945 after studying at the Banff School of Fine Arts and the Calgary Institute of Technology and Art. In 1950 he was appointed the Board's director of animation and in the ensuing years directed such films as "Romance of Transportation," "City of Gold," and "Corral." Mr. Low produced and co-directed "Universe," which has taken over two dozen awards in international competition. He was also co-director of "Labyrinth" at Expo '67. Since November 1972 he has been an executive producer for the general English program of the NFB.

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I am a producer of documentary films. I've had little to do with the production of drama, but I am an avid consumer of dramatic films in all forms. For a long time I have been particularly interested in westerns and in the changes that I have seen in the western film over the years.

When I was a child I lived in the ranching country of western Canada. It was still fairly close to the Wild West of legend, but the legend to us children was our grandmother's stories. She had come 700 miles to southern Alberta, with her family, in a covered wagon and before there were roads. Her stories were about the time when the local toughs came over the border and shot out the transom in grandmother's living room. The oral tradition—yarns, tall tales, folk songs—was still alive in the years before radio, at least before we had a radio. And books, which were not that plentiful and were expensive, did not for the most part inhibit invention. On occasional Saturday afternoons, we saw movies in the small town theater. The movies were infrequent enough to stand out in high relief in my memory; Tom Mix and later Hopalong Cassidy were the popular screen heroes of the period. The films seemed to be natural extensions of the folklore that we knew: a kind of interpretation that reinforced the ideas of courage, stoicism, and simple frontier values, reflected in memories of the people of the local community. They were exaggerated versions of the traditional tall tales and obviously universally popular. By this I do not mean that all our folklore is objectively useful and appropriate for all societies. Far from it. Much folklore or legend is partisan or tribal, like the cowboy and Indian stories which tended to reinforce the white man's conviction that he had every right to bring "civilization" to the frontier. Some of the oldest surviving legends are universal in character because they are concerned with fundamentals,



and they seem to be adaptable to many cultures. The best of the cowboy legends represent the struggle of individual conscience against evil forces and insurmountable obstacles, with no support from an indifferent or demoralized society—a universal story.

That cowboy and Indian films did not reflect any useful values for the Indian children who also shared the main street of my childhood town, and sometimes the theater, was something I do not remember considering or thinking about as a child. And often, the simple morality tales of the western carried with them the broader implication of acceptable violence in that black-and-white world where bad men were all bad. Tarzan in the movies was also an intense cultural influence which shaped an attitude toward the world. I still have trouble with the implications of those films, even after having been in Africa. Still, when they were not projecting the obvious racism that characterized many of them, those films were probably an enriching experience which expanded the world for us as children. Certainly, if the film did not satisfy fully our desire for experience, it was a taking-off point for endless days of play and adventure.

Since that time, the nature of films has been changing. When I was a child, the western had many real cowboy actors and some cowboy directors. As the real, historical western receded into the distance, this type of film began to draw inspiration from its predecessors. The western became a profound international cultural influence, but now its audience was less and less critical of its tone, implication, and subtle historical texture and more receptive to exaggeration and violence, providing that it was realistically staged. I refer only to technical realism: the way a man collapses when struck by a bullet, or, more recently, the way his head explodes. At a certain point, I became aware of the mechanical quality of stories which seemed to be computerized versions of earlier films, which were themselves versions of earlier films. The makers of these films seemed to have no experience of the original. The Italian "spaghetti" western, the German western, the Spanish western—with heroes who represented enigmatic power in a surrealistic setting or in an exaggerated bloodbath—were vaguely symbolic but super-realistically violent. The morality tale had become an immorality tale.

Recently I attended a convention of documentary film producers from African and Asian countries. I was not surprised to learn that certain feature film productions, particularly westerns, had been banned in some countries, partly because of racial overtones, partly because governments felt that the stimulus of violence was not conducive to the general social welfare and stability.

There is a symbiotic relationship between the consumers and the producers of this form of perverse mythology. Real mythology grows. Its social appropriateness is continuously tested in the oral tradition. It is malleable, depending on the instincts of the teller and the response of his audience. An audience in an earlier age would not allow an actor to outrage its sense of appropriateness. An artist had to have a finely adjusted antenna for what is a separation of audience from story-teller. The celluloid barrier prevents interaction with the audience, and television transmission further inhibits direct social communal interpretation. When did you last hear a film booed or hissed in a theatre or in a living room? In my opinion, films often are an outpouring of essentially antisocial and aggressive imagery outside the context of the lives and social realities of most viewers. The isolating and alienating influences of urban compression are reinforced by this medium. The mind which is alienated, and learning to hate, is particularly receptive to a kind of self-justifying and self-pitying reinforcement. Mysterious power, supernatural luck, the sanction of higher forces, narcissistic posturing, and inhuman indifference to suffering and death, all characterize certain westerns and many other films that we are now familiar with.

I know that under some intolerable conditions, violence is often the only way to justice. But having, in one generation, inherited a global communication miracle, is it not criminally irresponsible to play continuously the drums of warlike challenge, the shouts of vengeful triumph, even though these sounds may stir us most deeply? We are all children of some tribal heritage with all its noble history and bloody conflict. But now, we must discover broader loyalties to life. The music and language and image of our planetary messages must look beyond the memories of the enemies of forest, plain, and mountain and see in other startled eyes the same shared visions.

What has one of the first expressions of the cinema, the western, become? Will all other expressions follow the same route in the search for the adrenalin kick? I do not think that box-office can be equated with audience response, just as ratings can only measure how many people look, and not what creative or destructive influence the program had in broad social, human terms. The reasoning that people should be able to watch what they want becomes meaningless when real choice is, in the long run, limited, or when the overall situation confronting the entire society is one of grave danger. When artistic or cultural expression becomes fixed by a form of image and sound recording, it is in danger of becoming a source for a second and third generation of expression. In this process the subtlety, truth, or social intent of the original will be lost or perverted. I think this is true of print as well as of the other media. So we

return to the question of how the media can be molded, modified, influenced in a living way by real people—with less distance between their more subtle reactions and the growing juggernaut of media machinery and systems which will mold society and culture to its own mechanical images. I am not attempting to ignore or denigrate the fine works of cinematic art we have witnessed; I believe the role of the artist is an important one. What concerns me is the growing spectator culture in which people lose the initiative and motivation to engage actively in maximizing the creative potentials of their own lives. Film and art should inspire creativity, not inhibit and certainly not hypnotize. Cinema has always carried in it some danger of elite interpretation, the manipulation of attitudes, and the erosion of creative social instinct in individuals and groups. It has also been seen to be a positive educating force and social catalyst. Television, which extends the cinematic image and makes it all-pervasive, magnifies dangers as it extends possibilities. A culture which is rich, alive, and broadly based can only be produced by the joyful participation of every man in that society. The great age of media which function as the nervous system of a healthy, vital, and joyful society is yet to come.

## Panel discussion

### Critical perspectives on violence as a dramatic convention in the arts and mass media

**Eli Mandel**

**Jean Basile**

**David Helwig**

**Eli Mandel**

Eli Mandel, professor of Humanities and English at York University, is a native of Estevan, Saskatchewan, a Ph.D. graduate from the University of Toronto, and an author. He won the Governor General's award in 1962 for his book, *Idiot joy*. His latest book is *Stony plain*.

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I want to begin with a couple of ideas which have occurred to me since I've been here. In the introduction to *Cases and materials on the control of violence on television in Canada*,\* I find in the two introductory pages something like ten examples of the use of words like *control*, *prescription*, *restriction*, *prohibit*, and *punitive*. In the general description of this symposium, one of the three themes for discussion is "control and

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\*A list of the CRTC background material is found in Appendix 5.



improvement". Now, I don't want to reflect on the efforts of the CRTC research staff (and I take it they do concern themselves with frameworks of reality) but the timidity of the approach, the fear implicit in the analysis seem to me not only symptomatic but alarming. I am alarmed. What is it that broadcasters and corporations and commissions and people like ourselves fear? Why do we use words like *control* so consistently? What are we trying to control? is it the audience? is it ourselves, our own natures? is it the media, the government, the effect? These seem to be questions that we haven't come to grips with, and I don't see the background papers to this symposium dealing with these questions either.

My task here is to talk about dramatic conventions in relation to violence. I think the subject raises a whole series of questions, but I'll try to deal with three in particular. The first is, to what extent should the conventional be regarded as a means of detaching the arts, or even formula drama, from reality? The second problem, arising from the first, concerns the opposite possibility: that conventions themselves are formative, either by altering our conceptions of ourselves or distracting us from reality by dulling our sense of the particular. Third, can the mass media in any sense be regarded as both the image and the effective technology of control and power? An image which is presented to an audience insistently, if not deliberately, is at least a cause of concern: the threat is not so much from the program as from the machine. What we're afraid of is not the stories, but the story-telling.

What does it mean to say that violence, however defined, might be a dramatic convention in the arts and the mass media? Who has been violated, and where and how? Do we mean to say that art, like laughter or wit, may be a concealed form of assault? that it sublimates some urge to kill, that some sublimations are better than others, and some worse? These questions point to very difficult theoretical problems: the origin and function of dramatic genres, for example; the distinction between fantasy in its psychological sense and art in its formal sense; the difference between expectation and judgment in an audience. The subject we've got before us involves a sociology of art, a generic theory and a theory of value.

If we turn to the question of a sociology of art first, one obvious difficulty seems to be that, despite brilliant efforts by individual theorists, we do not possess anything that could be called a satisfactory sociology of art. How can you reconcile, for example, Freudian, Marxist, structuralist, and statistical approaches to the subject? Without multiplying examples, I think it's fair to say that we can't do much more than guess about the functions of formalism and form itself.



Conventions of art (the element of design, the element of form—creativity in that sense) remain a problematic element in our discussion. Art repeats itself in its form—fugue, sonata, symphony, sonnet, comedy, tragedy, detective story, western, thriller, police story, epic, lyric drama. Should we distinguish between uses and intentions or between convention and anti-convention? or begin with possible explanations of art as formal principles?

"If speech were not conventional, we could not understand one another," or so observes the annotator of Humpty Dumpty's remarks to Alice about the meaning of glory. If speech were only conventional, there could be no poetry. It follows then that conventions are both necessary and conservative. They enable communication by preserving form. To the extent that they're formal, they introduce elements of detachment, disinterest, unreality that we all recognize in fictions—the perfect gods of Irving Layton's "The Birth of Tragedy."

But if conventions indeed involve the conservative disinterestedness of art, why then should conventions of violence disturb any good reader, listener, or viewer? The genres of violent drama on television, in front of which millions sleep nightly in this country, descend from romance sources. From the sacrificial and purgation tales emerges the detective story (or so W.H. Auden argues in "The Guilty Vicarage"); from grail quests comes the western (observe the wasteland motifs which were deliberately written into "Have Gun Will Travel"); from displaced westerns, we get the thriller (according to Orwell and to Raymond Chandler, whose afterword to *The long good-bye* might prove to be the indispensable defence of the form itself); and from displaced thrillers, the police story. In its contemporary form as urbanized romance, the police action-drama is not at all an invention of our time except for its setting.

The above argument suggests that violent content becomes absorbed by formal expectations or generic considerations. At least once a century Ahab has to die again, even if Ishmael, resurrected in a new role, turns out to be Duddy Kravitz. But what does it mean to say, we repeat old forms? In "The Guilty Vicarage" Auden suggests a very important distinction between fantasy and art: fantasy is the form in which we project guilt onto others so that we feel innocent; art is the form in which we are disturbed by what we actually read or see.

It seems to me, from Auden's line of argument, that we should be asking for not less, but more violence on television. We have not seen Goya's "Disasters of War," at least not on television. We've turned our faces away from the reality that is art itself.

## Jean Basile

Jean Basile est journaliste et auteur de nombreux articles, d'une pièce de théâtre (*Joli tambour*, 1966) et de cinq romans: *Lorenzo* (1963), *La jument des Mongols* (1964), *Le grand Khan* (1967), *Les voyages d'Irkoutsz* (1970), *L'Acide* (1970). Boursier du Conseil des Arts du Canada, il est actuellement Chef du Service Arts et Lettres du journal *Le Devoir*.

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Je vous parlerai de la violence en tant que convention dans les émissions dramatiques à la télévision. On aurait sans doute souhaité que je fasse une analyse de contenu des émissions telles que "Mannix" ou "Canon", que j'en dénombre les meurtres et les divertissements divers et, enfin, que je verse une larme hypocrite sur tout le sang et les coups de poing dont se délecte manifestement l'auditoire de la télévision à en juger par les cotes d'écoute.

Je n'ai pas l'intention de le faire, et ce pour un certain nombre de raisons. En premier lieu, je trouve que le problème de la violence est moins apparent sur les canaux français que l'on voit au Québec qu'il ne l'est sur les canaux anglais au Canada et, naturellement, sur les canaux américains. Ensuite, parce que, en tant que critique, je me suis toujours demandé si on pouvait juger des émissions de violence sans un point de comparaison très important, qui est le sexe. J'ai toujours pensé qu'il serait intéressant de voir sur deux canaux différents une émission de pure violence et une autre de pur sexe et, ensuite, obtenir les analyses des sentiments de l'auditoire, des cotes d'écoute; et c'est à partir de ce moment uniquement que nous aurions, à mon avis, un élément réel de comparaison et de l'intérêt du public.

Il faut convenir que la violence est présente à la télévision, même sur les écrans de télévision de langue française. Ce problème, à mon avis, est un point de morale politique. Les gouvernements sont-ils convaincus que la violence à la télévision est un exutoire nécessaire comme on l'entendait hier dans le film qui nous a été présenté? Et si c'est un exutoire, de deux choses l'une: ou bien on pratique la politique du laisser-faire, ou bien on considère que c'est une incitation directe à la bagarre et au crime, en fait, un élément de détérioration de notre morale collective, et on agit d'autorité. Mais, je me demande si, aujourd'hui, quiconque est capable d'agir d'autorité pour interdire ce qui plaît finalement à des millions d'électeurs. J'irai même beaucoup plus loin. Avons-nous encore aujourd'hui une morale collective qui nous permette de juger sainement d'un problème aussi précis, aussi évident que la violence à la télévision? En fait, quand je regarde la réalité d'une part, et quand je regarde la télévision d'autre part, et là je parle naturellement de la télévision diffusée

en français au Canada, j'ai l'impression que nous sommes très en-deçà de ce que je peux voir dans la rue.

J'habite un quartier populaire à Montréal. Je vois les enfants se comporter dans la rue. Je les vois jouer, je les vois se battre, et j'ai l'impression que je n'ai jamais vu cette rue et ces éléments de réalité à la télévision pas plus que je n'ai vu des éléments spécifiques de violence présents sur l'écran reproduits dans la rue. J'ai l'impression que les enfants se sont toujours battus, qu'ils se battent encore aujourd'hui et qu'ils se battront toujours. Et la faute peut en être aussi imputée aux livres tout comme à la violence qui nous entoure, que ce soit la violence de la politique, celle de la pollution ou celle de l'alimentation, bref une violence qui dépasse très largement, je pense, la simple télévision. Au fond, je crois qu'il nous faut admettre un principe de base très simple: la télévision commerciale se préoccupe avant tout de faire le plus d'argent possible, c'est une évidence.

Si la violence paie, par conséquent c'est qu'elle est bonne, à condition naturellement qu'elle porte l'habit des bons; et c'est pour cela que nous assistons généralement à cette inversion incroyable que les "bons", dans les séries de violence, sont toujours plus violents que les "méchants" sous prétexte qu'ils doivent défendre la morale publique. Mais je dois quand même apporter un petit peu d'eau au moulin au niveau de la violence à la télévision et j'aimerais le faire pour élargir un peu les débats au niveau du medium lui-même, de la morphologie du medium.

Ainsi, en tant que critique de télévision, c'est-à-dire un monsieur qui regarde la télévision de nombreuses heures par jour, je me surprends de ne plus pouvoir distinguer la réalité de la fiction. J'ouvre la télévision le matin, je la ferme le soir, mais bientôt je serai capable de ne plus la fermer du tout parce que les émissions dureront vingt-quatre heures sur vingt-quatre. Et ce que je vois, par ailleurs, ce n'est pas une émission distincte, fût-elle violente, mais un continuum d'émissions qui contient aussi bien des émissions d'information avec des séquences de violence prises sur le vif, des séquences où je vois une vieille dame charmante qui commet un acte de violence sur une volaille en nous montrant comment dépecer un poulet, que des émissions sportives qui sont, de fait, des émissions violentes. On a vu cette année, par exemple, le hockey devenir littéralement une arène de boxe sans que personne, semble-t-il, ne se pose des questions réelles sur ce sujet pas plus qu'on ne s'en pose, d'ailleurs, sur les dramatiques.

A mon avis, la télévision ne peut pas être séparée en petites émissions; il faut plutôt la considérer comme un tout organique. En d'autres termes, je



me demande si la télévision, par sa programmation continue, et qui, pour moi, constitue l'émission véritable de la télévision, ne génère pas en elle-même une sorte d'organisme. Bien que cela puisse paraître un peu bizarre, j'ai souvent l'impression que la télévision a sa propre vie, qu'elle a une espèce de morale. En fait, nous avons tous l'impression que, parce que nous construisons des choses, ces choses-là vivent selon nos propres désirs. On a bien vu dans le cas des machines, par exemple, que ce n'est pas tout à fait vrai, qu'elles dirigent une usine autant que les directeurs. Je crois que la télévision, maintenant, en est là et que nous avons devant nous un organisme qui a ses règles, sa morale, et que nous devons la considérer en elle-même, par elle-même, sans essayer de lui apporter des critères anthropomorphiques qui lui sont, me semble-t-il, peu applicables. En d'autres mots, l'émission violente doit être considérée violente, non pas par rapport à notre morale conventionnelle, mais par rapport à celle du medium, la morale du medium étant dégagée par l'ensemble des programmations. Prenons un exemple: si je vois une émission violente de style dramatique à la télévision, cette émission est-elle plus violente ou moins violente que les séquences d'information que j'ai vues lors des journaux-parlés où, prenons l'exemple du "60" de Radio-Canada, l'on nous présente des scènes d'enfants qui meurent au Bangla Desh et, autrefois, les scènes d'horreur du Vietnam? Je suis sûr que le public ne fait aucune différence entre ces deux scènes, c'est de la violence de toute façon et c'est avec ces deux critères-là qu'il va juger de la relativité de la violence à la télévision. Je pense qu'on peut aller encore un tout petit peu plus loin au niveau de la morphologie du medium, et étant écrivain, j'attache une très grande importance aux mots. A mon avis, les mots ne signifient pas "rien". Ils révèlent une réalité profonde. Je me suis aperçu de deux choses qui m'ont paru intéressantes. Quand on parle de la télévision en tant qu'objet, en tant qu'outil, on appelle la partie de la lampe écran, qui est cathode, un canon d'électrons. Déjà, je trouve en cela que la télévision porte en elle une idée de violence. Ensuite, la marche des électrons de cette cathode sur la lampe image s'appelle un "bombardement d'électrons". Je me dis alors: "Comment se fait-il qu'un objet mort ait suscité, chez les créateurs de vocabulaire, des mots qui déjà impliquent la violence?" En ce sens, j'aimerais qu'on se pose sérieusement la question de savoir si la télévision n'est pas simplement l'outil possédant une certaine violence qui correspond au moment de la civilisation, qui est le nôtre, et qui, manifestement, est un moment de violence et de dépréciation des normes morales que nous sommes habitués à suivre d'après notre tradition.

Je me demande si nous ne devrions pas aussi réfléchir un petit peu sur le sens de l'image qui porte peut-être en elle d'autres messages que ceux que nous voyons ordinairement. Je pense que nous sommes trop



cartésiens. Nous voyons une image, nous en reconnaissons les signes, nous disons: "Oh, c'est une homme qui tue une femme. Quelle horreur!" Mais n'y a-t-il pas derrière cette première image d'autres images qui pourraient naître de cette vie des électrons? De même que la violence chez l'homme se manifeste non seulement au niveau des gestes, par un coup de poing, un meurtre, mais encore au niveau de ses molécules ainsi que le montre Stéphane Lupesko dans son ouvrage *Energie de la matière vivante*—cette lutte moléculaire n'étant ni l'effet ni la cause des actes violents, mais une simple transformation énergétique nécessaire à la vie de la matière sur laquelle nous ne pouvons pas projeter anthropomorphiquement les états d'âmes de la psychologie humaine. De même, il se peut qu'un appareil de télévision soit un champs de lutte électronique où se transforme une énergie propre sur lequel nous ne pouvons pas projeter l'état d'âme de notre psychologie humaine. Si cela est, il faut naturellement se poser la question de savoir si cette violence électronique, qui se situe en dehors de nous et sans référence à nos schémas moraux, peut être préjudiciable à l'homme et, si cela est, comment elle se manifeste et comment elle peut nous attaquer. J'ai lu en 1964, dans le revue *Time*, un article assez intéressant à ce sujet. Dans cet article, on exposait le résultat d'une série d'observations sur le comportement d'enfants regardant la télévision en moyenne de trois à six heures par jour et 20 heures durant le week-end. Ces enfants montraient des signes d'hyperactivité et d'agressivité, suivis de phases de léthargie. Cette expérience fut refaite sur des rats blancs que l'on exposa simplement devant les écrans de télévision. Ils montraient des signes identiques. Cependant, ni les enfants ni les rats n'avaient regardé des émissions particulièrement violentes. En fait, ils n'avaient regardé aucune émission. Ils avaient simplement été exposés à la télévision. En d'autres termes, ils avaient été soumis à un bombardement d'électrons qui, lentement, et sans qu'on puisse en voir le contenu, avait une action sur leur comportement quotidien. Enfin, en terminant, je pense qu'il faudrait déborder largement le fait du contenu pour en arriver à analyser le medium en tant qu'élément possible de violence sur l'être humain.

### David Helwig

David Helwig is literary manager of CBC television drama. Born in Toronto, Mr. Helwig was raised there and at Niagara-on-the-Lake. He is a graduate of the universities of Toronto and Liverpool, a former professor at Queen's University, and the author of four published books of poetry, a novel, a book of short stories, and a documentary on criminals. He has also edited an anthology of new Canadian short stories.

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A critic is a certain kind of moral philosopher concerned with judgments

that are particular rather than general, intuitive rather than systematic. Like the poet, he finds it hard to prove his usefulness, and like the philosopher, he will be accused, if he is good at his job, of heresy. My own consideration of the subject of this symposium has failed to convince me that television violence is an important issue. But it has demonstrated that one of the many things this country needs is intelligent and committed criticism of the few—the very few—hours of original television that we produce.

I'm not sure how many people do object to violence on television, or how deeply felt such objections are. I suspect that most people recognize television violence as almost completely conventional. A television program, like a movie, is a public ritual—"kiss, kiss, bang, bang," as Pauline Kael puts it.

At present, the American public appears to be frightened of disorder. Those who have achieved a certain security and comfort fear that it will be taken from them. Rebels of various kinds, some from the best families, are eager to deny the social contract, to refuse assent to civility. Television violence, it seems to me, merely provides a scapegoat for this kind of anxiety. The problem, which may or may not be a real one, is certainly an American one, and there is a danger that we have become so accustomed to thinking in American terms that we may be guilty of asking God for just a tiny riot, just a little unjust war, so that we may have the same great issues and difficult decisions. We are not better people than Americans. We are not wiser or surer or more just, but we are a different society in a different historical position. The health of Canadian society may well be more threatened by a premature decency than by a nihilistic rebellion. And if this nihilistic rebellion exists, it is not the product of a few television shows, but a phenomenon central to a technological society.

The phenomenon of television itself is for most of us an American one. If we take a detached look at it, we discover that for something like eighteen to twenty hours each day we have available a series of electronic impulses organized to provide a small and generally even nervous and emotional response. No program is designed to create a response so strong that we would turn it off; none is deliberately organized to be altogether ignored. Television is by and large a habit, an anaesthetic. This is not a new insight, but it's one we often ignore. Television is constantly available and is generally predictable. The patterns of programming appeal to our delight and habit, same time next week.

If we seriously wish to change television, it seems to me it would be well to begin by restricting broadcasting to possibly as few as three or four

hours a day; and then to make the content unpredictable so that it is not always the same material at the same time of the week. It seems to me that this would do a great deal more to change television's effect than would minor tinkering with program content. The real phenomenon of television is the constant availability of a stimulus.

Popular art has always been emotional, melodramatic, violent. It has often been obscene. There is nothing especially wrong with these things. In fact, one of the problems of television violence is that no one is hurt, no one really dies. There was a very interesting article in the *New Yorker* by Michael Arlen a few months ago in which he talked about the lack of death on television, how all television death was merely conventional, how that medium never confronted mortality. Popular art will always, I suspect, tread a difficult, thin line between dramatically simplifying life and merely flattering our nastier fantasies. But the attempt to control program content rather than the ownership of broadcasting facilities, which is quite a different matter, will simply lead to a bureaucratic art which means, of course, no art at all. The best thing that can be done with or about the popular arts is to subject them to rigorous judgment, placing them within the moral universe of our whole lives.

I return to my initial point: Canadian television needs intelligent and committed critics, and getting them is within the realm of the possible. Critics are among those important people who make good art popular, and popular art good. We legislate what should be said, and how it should be said, at our peril, but to refuse to legislate standards does not mean that standards do not exist, only that the standards by which any art is to be judged are too particular, too subtle for generalization. A continuous public analysis, both sensitive and hard-headed, can do our television no harm and possibly much good.

I would like to reinforce, to repeat, and to agree with a point made by Professor Jowett, that the economic necessities of commercial broadcasting inevitably tend to make a heterogeneous audience into a homogeneous one. It seems to me that this is the crucial point in consideration of television programming quality. Inevitably (and it does not matter who heads them) what the American commercial networks must do is make as much profit as possible—sell as many commercials as possible, get as many people as possible watching not some part of their programming, but every part of their programming—the lowest common denominator effect. We are programming for a mass.

It is my belief, and it's a strongly-held political opinion, that the mass does not exist until it is made to exist by those in power. What we have is a



heterogeneous society, a majority which is merely an assembly of individuals, an assembly of minorities. Healthy broadcasting will program for everyone in the country, one minority at a time, possibly, at times—although this is impossible economically—for one person at a time.

## **Discussion from the floor**

In the discussion following the panel speakers' presentations, several people questioned the merit of comparing television with traditional art forms, while others attempted to differentiate between various forms of violence.

Judy LaMarsh, chairman of the Ontario Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry, noted that literature, art, and theatre have never been able to occupy millions of people's attention and time to the degree that television has. She expressed concern that not enough was yet known about the effect of extensive television viewing on an individual: "Marshall McLuhan says the medium is the message but he's not just talking about the box, he's talking about the box plus the watcher. That's the real concern. What's the chemistry? What's different about what happens to people who are watching television? Isn't there something different about the quality of what happens over that enormously extended period of time?"

David Helwig suggested the questions Miss LaMarsh raised about the general effect of television were probably more worthy of consideration than was the specific issue of violence on television: "My own children are not threatened by programs of violence because they don't choose to watch them. I am not sure, however, that they are not threatened by television."

Robert Liebert disagreed with Mr. Helwig's view that his children could not be influenced by violent programs: "Suppose, for a moment, that there was just one child who could be influenced by television violence, who lives down the street from you. Your child could be a victim of that child's action and thus be very much influenced by television violence. I think it is a very serious mistake to say that only those who watch television are potentially affected by it."

Jean Campbell, the director of early and basic education at the Alberta Educational Communications Corporation, suggested that in the past literature was written for a select few who had the skills to look at it and understand it. She expressed concern that television's mass audience may not possess the critical knowledge of the medium necessary to avoid



being unduly influenced by it: "We teach children in school to read and to write. The two go hand in hand. They don't learn to read without writing. On the other hand, we have people at home who are sitting watching a medium, and they don't have the skills that go into producing or making that medium. Therefore, they have no skills with which to look and see whether it is credible or whether it is a great enlargement of life."

Lister Sinclair, vice-president, CBC program and policy development, disagreed with Eli Mandel's thesis of the continuity between television and traditional art forms, suggesting that it is quite wrong to lump all possible forms of violence into one category. He noted that, like many other persons, he is often disturbed by the type of violence presented on television:

Mandel does not object, however, to the very large amounts of violence found in such traditional dramas as *Oedipus Rex*. The different reactions, he suggested, were due to differences in the presentation and use of the violent material. The real difference is that in the kind of tragedy that we as intellectuals perhaps admire, violence is seen as the cause of problems and not as the solution to problems. It is a view of society that I do not think we share any more and that makes it very hard, I think, to find a justification for it in our programming. The Greek and Elizabethan view essentially is that the universe is in order and that the man of violence—the Macbeth, the Oedipus—throws that universe out of order; destiny itself brings about retribution. We don't have a retributive view of society anymore. What we see instead is the vendetta. And popular films such as "Straw Dogs" show violence as a solution rather than a problem. It is this sort of distinction that we must make, the distinction which Shaw puts admirably in the preface to *St. Joan*, that the play will not be of interest to people who simply want to see a young girl burnt to death, but it may be of interest to people interested in why she was burnt to death.

Bruce Raymond agreed with Mr. Sinclair, suggesting the symposium should not be considering violence as such, but rather the perversion of violence which he described as "brutality": "By brutality, I do not necessarily mean the brutality of 'Straw Dogs' or the brutality of the Munich Olympic Games incident. I am talking of any demeaning of the human spirit either physically or psychologically. I would call any game show which panders exclusively to greed a demeaning brutalization of the human spirit."

Mr. Raymond noted that 2500 years ago Plato discussed the same problem in the second book of *The Republic*: "He and his group tried to

determine how to bring about the perfect republic. They spent a long time trying to decide whether stories of the gods as told to the children of Greece were too bloody and gory to exemplify the proper social attitudes necessary for perfect citizens. At the end of the tenth book, Plato and Socrates and the others still had not come up with an answer. I think they decided it was futile."

## Panel discussion

### The treatment of violence in information programming

**Benjamin Singer**  
**Conrad James Winn**  
**Denise Bombardier**

#### **Benjamin Singer**

Benjamin Singer is a professor in the Department of Sociology, University of Western Ontario. He received his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania. His published works include *Black rioters: A study of social factors and communications in the Detroit riot*, and *Feedback and society*. He is editor of *Communications in Canadian society* and a contributor to Alvin Toffler's *Learning for tomorrow*. Mr. Singer's current interests include the measurement of normative changes which may result from television violence.

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We live in a complex society in which the vast majority of our experience of the larger environment comes to us not directly, but through some process of selection by media which thereby transforms the reality transmitted to us.

Our concern with violence has been heightened in the last decade in North America as civil disorder, serial violence, and terrorism escalated. News media have been linked to riots, mass murders, and political assassinations by psychopaths and organized terrorists. Some of the major ways by which mass media—and particularly television—are believed to have influenced reality have included providing perpetrators of violent acts with a forum to spread their views through the commission of publicized outrages; priming a population of a city facing civil disorder, stimulating them by photodramatic past riots, by amplifying agitators' voices, by showing techniques, by indicating locations, by transforming norms; revealing to potential unstable personalities or dangerous individuals things to which they would not ordinarily have access—instructions on atom bomb making, "inside information" to the FLQ, etc.; planting skyjacking (and other abduction and ransom notions) methods and ideas; glorifying certain acts of terror, for example, the beautyshop mass

murderer a few years ago who, following Richard Speck, wanted a publicized place in history; increasing public indifference to violent crime, as in the Kitty Genovese incident.\*

This concern has been transformed into inquiries superintended by a number of commissions in the U.S., including the Kerner Commission which looked into civil disturbances in general and included some analysis of the role of the media and the Eisenhower Commission which addressed itself to violence in general and the contributions of the mass media. This was followed in the U.S. by the Surgeon General's Report on television and social behavior, based on the Surgeon General's committee work between 1969 and 1971. The Report was marked by some controversy over the composition of its governing group and by its lack of attention to television news and violence.

But there are reasons for the lack of inquiry into violence and information programming that go beyond the purported influence of the industry, for I think we are somewhat unclear in our vision of what the news industry is or should be. (In this sense I am reminded of the cases of multi-billion dollar enterprises that have commissioned lavish research to tell themselves who they are!) Our lack of clarity comes from ambivalence: on one hand, our traditional view of press freedoms in a democratic society constrains us, yet on the other we are aware that television, particularly, *is* different: it has acquired a power to convince us unparalleled in the history of media. As Bradley Greenberg's research in low-income and ghetto areas in the U.S. put it, it is more depended upon and more believed: television news depicts life the way it really is. Other research on the credibility of television news compared with newspapers shows a distinct trend: in 1959, people more often believed a newspaper story, but by 1968 more than twice as many Americans were most inclined to believe television.

These facts—that we depend upon TV so completely for our essential view of world reality, that it reaches and influences so many more people than the other news media, that it may approach the status of a utility such as phone service, power, and water—may qualify television news for some form of heightened control. Such control further depends (at least with respect to violence) on three other considerations which cannot be considered independently of each other: is the environment portrayed an unbiased reproduction from a universe of events? is the meaning of purportedly violent representations transmitted to and interpreted by the

\*On 13 March 1964, in Queens, N.Y., Kitty Genovese was raped and murdered while a reported 38 people saw and did nothing. Richard Speck brutally murdered eight student nurses, in 1966, in Chicago.



audience as we assume? has it an effect, and if so, what kind? These questions are relevant in their own right, but are also intertwined with our attempt to identify who or what an information medium such as television is. And this is pertinent to any discussion of controls.

Controls may be external or internal. If the internal controls are weak or insufficient, there is an invitation to imposition of external controls. Since the information industry claims many of, and in fact some would say more than, the prerogatives and privileges of such other enterprises as medicine, law, or engineering, I am deliberately choosing to compare it with such professions in which self-government is especially strong. As in those endeavors, the client accepts the product on faith, in a society that increasingly compels us to depend upon television for certainty.

The dimensions I perceive as relevant to this rough model for comparison are those which distinguish the "professional" from the "market" ethic.

The first dimension of the professional ethic deals with the well-being of the client, which should be the primary concern. The second is that the professional will operate objectively for that good, without personal involvement or personal interests conditioning his action. The third is that such action presupposes an objective selection of actions which are based upon the universe of symptoms, laws, structural principles, etc. Rather than responding to market demand—what the patients or clients wish to hear—the professional tells the client what his objective findings are.

The market ethic simply operates on the premise that market conditions are met. The operator makes or stocks what a population wants, and attempts to sell the client what is most profitable. Selection will be based on that, and of course, caveat emptor—the responsibility is in great part lodged with the buyer. These are pure types, of course, with plenty of deviations: the quack doctor and unethical lawyer are depatures from the professional ethic, just as the merchant is who insists on selling a lower-priced item that fits one's needs more adequately. But they are deviations. In television news, the deviation is that television influences events to happen that ordinarily would not.

And in fact, many such cases of television's influence are on record. The most blatant example is the television news crew which encouraged boys to commit acts of violence for the camera at the Watts riot, as described by Robert Conot in *Rivers of blood, years of darkness*. Not as obvious but at least as effective in creating the events to be reported on is the Skinnerian reinforcement, for example, at Austin, Texas in 1970 when a



mass protest became unexpectedly peaceful, leading network TV crews to pack up and leave without covering the story. While the first type of influence is obvious and would be scorned as unethical by many information broadcasters, the second type, subtler but perhaps more pervasive, would not raise questions. But what is the real difference between asking boys to display violence on camera, and waiting and cutting out those events that are not violent? Why should a march of 20,000 people against the Cambodian invasion be less significant when peaceful than when violent, unless a market ethic is operating?

I would argue, as a complex working hypothesis, that our "reality ratios" (vis-à-vis violence) are in part the product of a market ethic and that the most powerful effect such ratios have on the human psyche is to transform preceding normative structures. This seems to be the most lightly attended phenomenon in the research done on media violence, yet the evidence for it from indirect sources compels us to look at it more closely.

Consider, for a moment, each of the following. Strange-sounding names, unacceptable at first, become familiar and finally acceptable. Classical music is played for non-likers and jazz is played for non-likers; both kinds are accepted with repetition. Pedestrians observe others jay-walking, and then increase their own illegal behavior to eight times as often. We see a parking space in a no-parking zone and notice others are parked there; otherwise law-abiding, we park. In 1964, 87% of U.S. blacks believed riots were harmful. After five years of exposure (much of it via television news), only 29% continue to believe they are harmful. Films of subincision (sexual mutilation) rites with repetition come to be less disturbing.

The mechanism here is one we are all acquainted with and underlies much of generic change. First we are shocked by something new, unacceptable, or strange. Repetition leads to emotional habituation or "familiarization" as some psychologists refer to it. Ultimately, our normative framework changes. After norms change and behavior is tolerated and then acceptable, the performance of it by others is facilitated. As Professor Otto Larson put it in one of the Eisenhower Commission reports: "The critical possibility is that the acceptance of violence can make those who accept it a party to the occurrence of violence by making those who are inclined to engage in violence act in ways they sense to be socially tolerated, approved or even expected."

Because we are not yet knowledgeable about the internal changes in humans engendered by information programming, we cannot clearly understand the mish-mash of findings, of contradictions relating to the

change or persistence of external behavior. And while a great deal of work has been done in categorizing manifest content, we do not have, in the work on violence, sufficient data on the meaning of messages to the audience, messages we assume mean one thing but which may have diverse actual meanings to the public.

The research findings so far have been attempts to find out if what we believe an audience perceives can be linked causally to direct aggressive/violent behavior. The findings have often been questioned because of the difficulties—methodological and ethical, among others—of measuring the dependent variable, some act of aggression, not to mention the applicability of laboratory findings to real life. In real life, however, the changes of broadest importance are likely to involve the intervening variable which has thus far been given short shrift, that is, the sociological variable, the changes in norms that for most of the population underly and predispose to violent behavior.

I would argue that it is logically more defensible at this point to begin to assess those changes, because I think this is where information programming is most likely implicated. I don't doubt that there are other phenomena at work as well, such as stimulus-response events, but I think that normative changes underly many of these as well.

In summary and conclusion, I have argued that there has been scattered but compelling empirical evidence for concern about the role of television news. Because of our dependence on it and the prerogatives of the industry, derived from the assumed non-elective nature of its product, the underlying concern with controls may be addressed by examining the ethic of the industry, and that part of this inquiry may be conditioned by the issue of how the events are selected. They in turn condition a "reality ratio" which has the potential power to change norms whose overall structure inhibits or facilitates expressed behavior. We are in a good position in Canada to be able to assess such changes. More than implicit in what I have said is the possible link between the mode of selection of news, violent content, its effects, and a consequent concern with control. These are hard issues to confront directly, for as Pamela Hansford Johnson has pointed out in her essay on the Moors murder trial: "It is quite difficult to ask even a simple question about the whole problem of licence today. . . . There are few intellectuals indeed who will lend themselves to serious discussion of whether, by mass communications, we are not poisoning that air—whether due to its stench, some people die; children brutally killed—or eight nurses slaughtered in Chicago. What is liberty worth without self control?"

## Conrad James Winn

Conrad James Winn is a political scientist, Department of Political Science, Carleton University. Born in Shawinigan, Quebec, Dr. Winn is a graduate of McGill University and the University of Pennsylvania. He has taught at Rosemont College (Pennsylvania), York University, Waterloo Lutheran, and the University of Durham (England). Dr. Winn is author of a number of publications, including a book, *Political parties in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976).

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Economic objectives are legitimate. However, the needs of a civic society must have equal place. A responsible, participant society needs to be aroused by the objective importance of an event, and not by the means through which the event is portrayed.

The U.S. Surgeon General's Report on television violence demonstrated that media violence has a moderate but real tendency to encourage violent behavior. However, the same report showed that violent behavior need not take place if violent news stories are properly interpreted for the audience.

Other research shows that people can become inured to crises, desensitized to problems. A society that becomes insensitive to artificial crises may not know how to cope with genuine ones. The economic pressure toward dramatic and fictionalized news discourages the networks from spending money on researchers that could otherwise be spent on technology or camera crews. The visual element gets priority over the informational element. Television is eager to get exciting film even if the film is staged (it is known that a significant amount of the film on Vietnam was staged by the U.S. Army for the American networks).

Those who defend Canadian television may say that there is more aggression and violence on U.S. TV than on Canadian TV, as indeed Professor Singer's work five years ago showed. However, one of my students repeated Professor Singer's research this year and found that Canadian TV news, at least, was less violent than its American counterpart.

Some recommendations: first, as a gesture toward truth and as a possible limit on violence, television news should be prohibited from employing staged film. Secondly, the networks should be discouraged from portraying violence that is non-essential to a news story. The networks have a vested interest in conflict, but society has a vested interest in cooperation. Thirdly, networks should be encouraged to reduce the number of news stories per program and devote more attention to each. Fourth, the



networks should bring coherence to their news broadcasts by choosing story sequences that make sense and by identifying relationships among the stories. If McLuhan is right and the medium is the message, then the message of network news is that the world is chaotic and unfathomable.

### Denise Bombardier

Docteur en sciences politiques de l'université de Paris, Denise Bombardier a récemment publié un livre à Paris, *La voix de la France*, qui a causé une certaine sensation dans les milieux de la radiodiffusion en France. Journaliste, animatrice du magazine de politique étrangère de Radio-Canada, *Présence internationale*, Denise Bombardier a récemment contribué à des projets de recherche, en collaboration avec les gouvernements français et belge.

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Les journalistes qui sont allés à l'école ont tous retenu l'histoire de leurs confrères et messagers, d'il y a deux ou trois mille ans, assassinés lorsqu'ils avaient le malheur de rapporter au tyran ou autre potentat une mauvaise nouvelle. Il paraît même que quelques-uns de ces journalistes pionniers avaient fini par trouver le moyen d'éviter l'accident, le travail mortel, en créant deux styles de narration: le style euphémique et le style dramatique. Le premier faisant passer la nouvelle en douce, le second rendant le récit si passionnant que le public finissait par oublier la nouvelle elle-même, pâle copie de la nouvelle recréée. Dans les deux cas, le style subordonnait le fond. Aujourd'hui, les confrères, gardant en mémoire nos premiers martyrs de la profession, parlent de contenant et de contenu, de medium et de message. La télévision, comme notre messager, véhicule des faits, des faits de réalité. Mais, aussi comme le messager, elle a tendance à les réaménager.

D'abord, elle le fait en fonction de ses caractéristiques propres, c'est-à-dire une tendance au spectaculaire et à faire appel à la sensibilité avant de faire appel à la raison. Outre ces deux caractéristiques, elle doit aussi tenir compte de la fugacité du message, de la limitation de temps, ce sont les contraintes de la technique télévisuelle. S'ajoutent à cela les contraintes de l'institution qui la contient, laissant une plus ou moins grande liberté de manoeuvre, une plus ou moins grande place dans l'horaire en fonction de la hiérarchie des valeurs de cette institution. Enfin, il y a les contraintes culturelles. Le message est réaménagé selon des critères soit moraux—il ne faut pas choquer le public, heurter ses convictions—et alors on utilisera le style euphémique; soit de rentabilité, ce qui frappe davantage, attire le plus grand public, augmente la cote d'écoute, et alors on maximisera la situation conflictuelle.

L'un et l'autre ne font pas place à l'information qu'il faut bien appeler



“idéale”, celle qui, respectant l’essentiel du message, le présente sans lui enlever son impact et sans le pervertir. La violence dans nos émissions d’information, nous ne l’inventons pas. Elle nous vient de l’actualité, des souffrances et des tyrannies des hommes. Le F.L.Q., ce ne sont pas les journalistes québécois qui l’ont inventé. Ce ne sont pas eux, non plus, qui ont décrété la loi sur les mesures de guerre. La violence est l’aboutissement d’un manque de justice ou d’imagination. La violence n’est pas le fait des journalistes, elle est le fait des pouvoirs: pouvoir politique, pouvoir patronal, pouvoir syndical, pouvoir culturel. Bien sûr, même si le choix de maximiser les conflits est un choix de culture, de la culture dans laquelle baigne le medium, la responsabilité des journalistes ne disparaît pas pour autant. Il faut bien admettre que, dans la présentation de l’information télévisée, l’utilisation gratuite de la violence est souvent inversement proportionnelle à la compétence du communicateur. Bien sûr, il y a les “hot lines”, les “hot seats” et les “hot shows”. Mais dans une société comme la nôtre, où l’on crie sur tous les toits que l’effort intellectuel n’est pas une valeur en soi, qu’apprendre des connaissances nouvelles doit se faire sans douleur, sans effort, comme fumer du “pot”, quel combat pour un journaliste que de tenter d’expliquer sans démagogie ce fait qu’est la violence. Voir et regarder s’entre-déchirer le peuple portugais, voir ces enfants irlandais lapidés par des soldats britanniques, n’est-ce pas plus attirant qu’une entrevue d’analyse politique?

La violence dans l’information télévisée? Faux problème, en quelque sorte. La violence comme expression de notre culture, voilà ce qu’il faut discuter réellement. Mais, comme je ne suis pas partisane de l’explication globaliste et trop systématique, je veux bien continuer de scruter notre façon de présenter l’information. A mon sens, l’utilisation à outrance de sigles dans le vocabulaire de l’information est, dans une certaine mesure, une façon de violenter le public en créant une barrière d’incompréhension entre lui et des réalités dans lesquelles il est quotidiennement plongé. Le ton inquisitorial de certaines émissions—surtout au réseau anglais, je dois bien le préciser—où le journaliste tente de se substituer à un quelconque tribunal du peuple (et l’on sait ce qu’historiquement ont valu les tribunaux populaires) est également une manière de violenter le public. Je pense, également, à la place faite aux émissions d’information, dans certaines stations de télévision et en particulier dans les chaînes privées, où, à cause du peu de budget, on offre peu d’information, une information de qualité moindre au public, ça aussi, c’est une façon de violenter le public. A vrai dire, il faut admettre que la télévision canadienne, et plus particulièrement les chaînes françaises, ne projette pas une image de violence systématique comme ce peut être le cas aux Etats-Unis. L’explication qui me semble la plus plausible, du moins en partie, est que

les journalistes des chaînes anglaises doivent concurrencer les journalistes des chaînes américaines, donc adopter le ton de leurs confrères américains s'ils veulent soutenir cette concurrence. En ce sens, la violence n'est certes pas un des problèmes majeurs de notre télévision, contrairement aux journaux et à la radio qui, par le biais des faits divers, alimentent en violence l'information. La télévision, parce qu'elle fait peu ou pas de place au traitement du fait divers—meurtres, accidents ou catastrophes—échappe à ce piège. Personnellement, je serais portée à penser qu'une des premières formes de violence en information est qu'elle soit véhiculée et analysée par des communicateurs incompetents ou partisans. Et quand je parle de communicateur, je ne parle pas seulement de celui qui est à l'antenne, je parle de tous ceux qui sont impliqués dans cette communication. Nous détenons, nous journalistes, ce pouvoir d'informer. Lorsque nous en abusons par manque de qualité professionnelle, par manque de formation, par manque d'éthique ou par partialité, nous violentons notre public. De la même façon, lorsque l'homme politique, le dirigeant patronal, le dirigeant syndical tentent de contourner le jeu démocratique de la libre circulation des informations, dénoncent les journalistes en vue d'en faire des boucs émissaires ou essaient de faire pression sur eux, je considère qu'en dernier ressort ils violentent le public. Un journaliste qui s'auto-censure, parce qu'une partie de l'information qu'il détient ne coïncide pas avec ses opinions politiques; un homme politique qui fait pression sur un journaliste pour qu'il ne dise pas toute la vérité—et la façon de faire pression prend des formes très "glamorisées"—ces deux personnes posent, à mon sens, des gestes de violence. Dans notre société, l'utilisation de la violence physique est anachronique sauf parmi la pègre et la police. C'est de la violence morale qu'il faut se préoccuper maintenant. Traquer un invité en entrevue, donner ex cathedra une information douteuse, affirmer une vérité comme si c'était "La vérité", voilà comment, à mon sens, le journaliste peut être violent. Mais n'est-ce pas là le comportement de trop d'hommes de pouvoir? ou de femmes? Je le déplore, car je crois que le journaliste doit être autre chose qu'un homme ou une femme de pouvoir. Quant à la télévision, elle n'existe que par la culture qui la contient. Dans une société où le dollar est roi et la violence rentable, les émissions en sont le reflet. Dans une société où les rapports interpersonnels et de groupes ne se déroulent souvent plus que sur le mode de l'affrontement, l'information véhiculée est présentée sur ce même mode. La télévision, si elle ne doit pas maximiser ces conflits, ne peut pas, tout de même, les automatiser. Dans cette perspective, la télévision n'a aucun pouvoir et l'information télévisée aucune influence réelle en matière de changement social. Ceci est une constatation, bien sûr, et non un souhait ou un espoir.

## Discussion from the floor

Several journalists and television news executives reacted sharply to the criticisms of news programming made by professors Winn and Singer.

Bill Cunningham, vice-president of news and public affairs for the Global Television network, stated he couldn't think of a network news executive in Canada or the United States who would not immediately fire any news crew caught staging events for film. He felt television's sometimes graphic depiction of riots, bombings, and wars simply provided the public with a true account of these events: "In the last twenty years, I and my colleagues have been in Vietnam, in Bangladesh, in Watts, and in Harlem. Are you suggesting for a moment that these things should not be covered or that they can somehow be covered non-violently?" In Mr. Cunningham's opinion, any attempts to shelter viewers from the violent aspects of a news story would falsify their perception of the event and hinder their ability to come to grips with it.

Knowlton Nash, chief of CBC news and public affairs, raised the question of whether there were some positive aspects to showing violence on television news. Mr. Nash noted that Vietnam had been referred to as the "living-room war"; for the first time, the violence and horror of war was brought, by television, into the living-rooms of hundreds of millions of people. He also recalled that during one of the American civil rights confrontations of the '60s, millions of television viewers watched as a police officer in Selma, Alabama loosed a pack of dogs on civil rights marchers. He said that "Both of these incidents had a profound effect in stimulating mass concern about issues which in turn led to government action. I think showing the violence of the war in Vietnam had a not insignificant part in ending the war in Vietnam."

Tom Gould, vice-president of news for CTV, agreed with Mr. Nash, and said that news coverage of violence can have a positive effect. He suggested police in the southern United States haven't dared use dogs on people since coverage was given to the incident in Selma. He further suggested television coverage may be helping to solve the problem of airplane hijacking: "If we think back, before television coverage there was a man who put a bomb on an Air Canada plane to blow up his wife so that he could collect the insurance money. There was minimal security even after that bombing. There was no security at airports. There is today. Further, when you look at what has happened to the whole skyjacking story, you realize there is only one solution to the problem of skyjackers and it's an international agreement to deny them sanctuary. Today, there are only a few countries left in the world that provide sanctuary."



Mr. Gould disagreed with the suggestion that journalists should examine in advance the possible implications of the coverage they give a particular event: "We know a story when we see one but we never, I suggest to you, stop to consider what the impact of that story might be. And that is a healthy thing. I once had a call from a university man who asked what surveys I undertake before doing a documentary program. I said none. If we knew what people wanted we would be in a position to manipulate and that isn't our function."

Mr. Singer questioned the validity of the claims made by Mr. Nash and Mr. Gould. Having surveyed American opinion polls dealing with public support for the Vietnam war, he found that in 1970, despite over five years of extensive television coverage, acceptance of the war was close to an all-time high.

Ken Sobol, a free-lance writer and journalist, noted that while journalists are quick to praise their coverage of race riots, Vietnam, and Selma, none of these events had taken place in Canada: "I would like to know if the news people feel that they achieved the same degree of impartiality and forthright reporting in the October crisis of 1970, or were certain other elements, controls, exerted on them that are not exerted elsewhere?"

Peter Trueman, Global Television news reporter, felt he had been less stringent in covering the 1970 crisis than he had been on several other assignments: "I've found, after twenty years in journalism, that the things I regret most I would classify as sins of omission rather than commission. Some of the omissions I made in my capacity as producer of the CBC 'National News' in October 1970 I regret. We were, I think, stampeded by the government and by one particular broadcast executive who over-zealously interpreted the government's suggestion for caution." Mr. Trueman felt, however, that the present preoccupation with violence could lead to similar sins of omission. Decisions to suppress scenes of violence would be far more dangerous for both newsmen and the public than a "publish and be damned" philosophy.

Garth Jowett asked the Global representatives to comment on one of their recent stories which, he said, centred around whether or not a race riot was going to take place in a Toronto suburb: "There was a very dramatic twenty-second demonstration by some young teenage thug on how to use the "nunchaku," chained sticks common to karate and kung fu, in which the cameraman focussed very dramatically on him. At the end of the interview, the camera zoomed in on nunchaku being held by another one of these thugs—in all, about a five-minute report." Jowett felt the incident

provided a prime example of a "pseudo-event", a story which is not really an event until made so by the mass media.

Mr. Cunningham admitted that he too had been concerned when he saw the story: "My reaction was to think, 'we may be making that particular problem worse.' I agree, I think we used bad judgment in that instance and the reporter had that pointed out very forcefully to him."

Denise Bombardier noted the French-language television newscasts in Canada do not have as much violent content as do the English Canadian newscasts. She suggested the difference may reflect the failure of Canada's English networks to resist American influence: "Le Canada est un pays culturellement différent des Etats-Unis, et je crois qu'il l'est dans la mesure où la violence au Canada est infiniment moins importante que la violence aux Etats-Unis. Je ne comprends pas pourquoi vos émissions de télévision reflètent tant de violence, sinon parce que vous ne savez pas résister à la culture télévisuelle américaine."

Kees Vanderhyden, director of research at Radio-Quebec, suggested the smaller amount of violence found on French-Canadian newscasts may reflect the tendency for French Canadians to be less interested in international news events than English Canadians: "J'ai l'impression que la télévision et la radio québécoises sont plus québécoises qu'internationales. Le journaliste anglais rapporte une violence qui vient de l'extérieur parce qu'il y est plus sensible que le journaliste québécois."

## **CRTC background paper: The news media function— Depiction of reality**

"News" originally meant novelties or tidings of recent events. The word *newspaper* did not come into use until the middle of the seventeenth century, when the people associated with newsletters began to make a concerted effort to chronicle current events quickly and directly. Scouts were hired to collect information which was then organized into newsheets by the journalists of the day, variously known as coranteers, diurnalists, gazetteers, and mercurists.<sup>1</sup>

The news service that we receive today, whether by newspaper, radio, or television, owes much to certain technical improvements which came about in the first half of the nineteenth century. These included the conversion of the hand-printing press (invented by Gutenberg in 1440) to steam in 1810, the utilization of the telegraph for the dispatching of messages in the 1830s, and the creation of the first wire service in 1846.<sup>2</sup>

Over the years, the news media have devised a number of generally accepted criteria for selecting which facts and methods of presentation are most appropriate. Smith lists eight:

1. the recency (newness) of the event, which "contains an inbuilt bias against explaining the previous events which had led to a new development";
2. geography (relevance for the intended audience) which "tends towards a bias on the side of authority" especially in terms of national news, and favors "the activities of government and its principal personalities . . . and people and things already well known";
3. the continuity of a long-running story, particularly if it reinforces audience expectations;
4. appeal to a mass audience through formula-stories "which confirm . . . stereotypical images";
5. events which are technologically appropriate for the medium, for example, television needs "dramatic filmable rituals, processions, disasters, stories which involve grief-stricken faces, collapsing buildings, great fires and fiestas. These will inevitably gain some kind of imaginative precedence over stories which relate to finance or education and are much harder to realize in visual terms";
6. the program structure within the news itself: "stories will be chosen which help to provide a pattern within the structure. . . . as in any other creative narrative exercise";
7. the non-specialist or interdisciplinary approach: "reporters will emphasize the more easily comprehensible aspects of a situation, as well as the 'human' elements and the non-technical";
8. "the believed public mood of the moment".<sup>3</sup>

The employment of such criteria, which are based on certain "known and obvious conventions and conditions" of the communications media, has contributed to certain commonly held criticisms of television as a journalistic medium:

The nature of sight-sound, edited presentation in the medium heightens and attenuates the more surface, visceral aspect of conflict and confrontation in our civilization. . . . As the level of irrationality in an event rises, so television's record of it "heats up", and the camera begins to exchange momentum, as it were, with the forces at work within the very situation it is supposed to be recording.

The medium undoubtedly tends to reward both personality and personability in those who are involved in or actually present the news.<sup>4</sup>

The North American news media are also encumbered, in the words of



Robert Baker and Sandra Ball (directors of the Task Force on Mass Media and Violence), by "the central institutions in the process of inter-group communication":

As social truth is organized today, the press is not constituted to furnish from one edition to the next the amount of knowledge which the democratic theory of public opinion demands. . . . When we expect it to supply such a body of truth, we employ a misleading standard of judgement. We misunderstand the limited nature of news, the illimitable complexity of society. . . . and put upon the press the burden of accomplishing whatever representative government, industrial organization, and diplomacy have failed to accomplish. Acting upon everybody for thirty minutes in twenty-four hours, the press is asked to create a mystical force called "public opinion" that will take up the slack in public institutions.<sup>5</sup>

Continuing in this vein, they suggest that "the purpose of communicating news should be to reduce uncertainty and to increase the probability that the audience will respond to conflict and change in a rational manner."<sup>6</sup> News is no longer simply the recitation in bulletin form of facts about what is happening now—violence and disorder, natural disasters, and the deliberations of public administrative bodies. It has become a genre, a literary type (like drama, epic, ode, novel, or sermon) with its own conventions of content and form. The subject matter of news is reports of the events, issues, conflicts, and problems of the day; the techniques used are those of inquiry, investigation, exposure, and assessment. The news provides us with information about "reality", and yet it does so in a highly compressed manner. As the mass media have become more sophisticated technically and politically, the news media have taken upon themselves a didactic role in society. By informing a mass audience about the important events of the day, they in fact create and sustain a necessarily circumscribed picture of society.

## CONSTRAINTS UPON THE DEPICTION OF REALITY

The media do not exist in isolation. They operate under various systems of ownership, management, and control within society. The material they present is intended to appeal to large numbers of the available audience (generally regarded as a mass audience). This audience consists of individuals who differ in age, education, interests, degrees of sophistication, and social and economic status. Despite these variables, the aim of each mass medium is to attract and retain the largest possible audience. This fact necessarily implies certain restrictions on the content and treatment of material. Other limitations are imposed by government

regulation, self-censorship, legal prohibition, competition from other media, the pressures of commercial enterprise, professional codes, and the creative and technical constraints inherent in each medium.

Both Smith and Small have discussed some of the innovations in news presentation techniques that have contributed to television's presentation of news as entertainment. For Smith, most of these changes took place during the decade 1958-68.<sup>7</sup> With the advent of television, it was no longer adequate simply to read news reports "from a sheaf of wire service tapes." In order to attract and hold the audience, the news had to be visualized. As newscasts became longer, from fifteen to thirty minutes, the news journalist began to emerge as a major national figure. The magazine format was often used to tell a story; the ninety-second headline report was lengthened to a feature of several minutes. Reporters became known for their individual style and for "hard-hitting interviewing," especially when confronting figures of authority. Small speaks of the journalist's job as the attempt "to determine what is real"—Walter Lippman's "search for 'reportable' truth":

Examining substance in the daily press or on the air reveals that much or almost all of what we call news is not really that, not in the sense of news as spontaneous happening. Most of "news" is contrived, planted, managed, massaged, manipulated, but it is still "news" in that the men reporting it are not managed, manipulated or themselves contriving. Their vision is one of fairness and honesty.<sup>8</sup>

Small relates that the first modern interview with a major public figure is purported to have been that between Horace Greeley and Brigham Young in Salt Lake City in 1859, and he considers this as merely the first in a series of journalistic devices that "frequently shape or re-shape happenings":

The interview led to the press conference and the initiative shifted from the press to the politician. . . . A step from news conference—which permits the press to raise questions which do not always please the interviewee—is the news release, a means to eliminate the questions. If the release contains news, the content is controlled by the source to a considerable degree. Certainly the embargo, the time of release, is his. . . . The release itself, however, is not a real event. It may be pertinent, it may be important, it may bear upon real events but in itself, it is manufactured.<sup>9</sup>

With television, information reporting has involved "the instantaneous mingling of theatre with the dissemination of actuality."<sup>10</sup> This perception

of news has been the subject of numerous directives from broadcast executives to their staff which have virtually achieved the status of news policies. The following quotation is from a lengthy memorandum prepared in 1963 by Reuven Frank shortly after he was appointed executive producer of the NBC "Evening News":

Every news story should, without any sacrifice of probity or responsibility, display the attributes of fiction, of drama. It should have structure and conflict, problem and denouement, rising action and falling action, a beginning, a middle, and an end. These are not only the essentials of drama; they are the essentials of narrative. . . .

The highest power of television journalism is not in the transmission of information but in the transmission of experience . . . joy, sorrow, shock, fear, these are the stuff of news. . . . Its symbolic truth, its power of evocation is enhanced by the supposed reality which the sounds which surround it simulate. . . . Film is not reality but illusion, at best an imitation of reality.<sup>11</sup>

Because there is no definitive version of the news, what is reported and the manner in which this is done is entirely dependent upon how the different (and competing) news media select and organize the available material. In recent years, a number of critics of television news have written at length on the news process in terms of the organizational considerations imposed by the networks on their news divisions. Epstein terms these requirements "procedures, systems, and policies intended to reduce the uncertainties of news to manageable proportions."<sup>12</sup> He claims that American television's version of the national news is subject to certain predictable restraints based on known costs which include air time and the availability of resources, both of personnel and equipment. The economic logic of commercial television reinforces the reporting of the expected or routinized event—one announced sufficiently in advance for a crew and equipment to be dispatched to the scene. What is at work here is the principle of diminishing returns: a fixed budget is allocated for the provision of a specific amount of news programming each week; there are a number of predictably newsworthy events and characters certain to produce a usable story; there is also a quota of filmed reports required to produce a balanced and "entertaining" newscast; and there is neither the time nor the opportunity to engage in the search for original information or investigative reporting.

Commercial broadcasting also bases many of its decisions on the theory of audience flow: the news is presented in such a way as to capture the interest of as many as possible of the potential viewers, and to retain



them for the duration of the newscast in the hopes that they will stay tuned to that channel for the programming which follows. It is felt that viewer attention will be prolonged by filmed footage that focuses on activity. Complex issues must thus be rendered in images that are visually precise, preferably reduced to black-and-white, with the emphasis on a highly dramatic confrontation between clearly-defined opponents:

News organizations require a set of internal rules in order to co-ordinate the efforts of correspondents, technicians, editors and producers into a news product that meets their budgets, standards and schedules. Lippman referred to these "standardized routines" as being absolutely essential to reduce the virtually limitless barrage of information to manageable proportions.<sup>13</sup>

### "HOLDING UP A MIRROR TO SOCIETY"

When television presents the news, not only does it select only a very small proportion of what really happened, it tends to put undue emphasis on those events it does report by giving the impression that it is exposing actual events in the real world with the viewer invited along as a special observer. For this reason, television has sometimes been termed a "window on the world". Another metaphor that has been used is of a mirror reflecting society, for with television the camera frames each image in such a way as to give it immediate impact: "The mirror analogy also suggests immediacy: happenings are reflected instantaneously, as they occur, as in a mirror. . . . The notion of a 'mirror of society' implies that whatever happens of significance will be reflected on television news. Network news, however, far from being omniscient, is a very limited news-gathering operation."<sup>14</sup>

Epstein explains at length the camera's role in "the resurrection of reality." When television provides us with information we very seldom see an event unfolding before the live camera. Instead, we are provided with a filmed reconstruction of a story about the event. This re-organization of reality is required because, more often than not, the natural sequence of events is full of "digressions, confusions and inconsistencies": "Editing involves selecting certain fragments of a film of a given subject and arranging them in an order which appears to represent a coherent view of the event. . . . This is done in order to eliminate all technically inferior film footage and reduce visual noise or disconcerting elements. . . . and to distill action from preponderantly inactive scenes."<sup>15</sup>

Several critics have said that this process—which is, after all, intrinsic to the nature of television—adds an element of distortion: "news weaves a secondary environment around every one of us who receives it. News

tends to lay out the order of 'priorities' among the issues which confront society; it creates some of the doubts and fosters the certainties of that society, placing them all in a context of its own."<sup>16</sup>

*The Listener* recently published a comment by British MP Christopher Tugendhat, called "The distorting mirror of television." He points out the strengths and weaknesses of television as a source of information and ideas: "Television's supreme strength is obvious. It is vivid and immediate. So much so that it can sometimes create in the viewer's mind the illusion of being present at the events taking place on the screen, or even, in some strange disembodied way, of participating in them."<sup>17</sup> He comments on the influence of television in turning public opinion in the U.S. against the war in Vietnam and in generating sympathy and concern for its refugees. However, if cameras are not present to record an event, it is almost as if it hasn't happened: "In the modern world, it is almost as if the only reality is that recorded by the television cameras. If they are not there, nothing seems to matter. If they are, our interest is aroused and our consciences engaged. But it leads to a very partial and distorted view of the world." He then goes on to criticize the simplistic results of television's excessive reliance on visual effects:

Television's immediacy and vividness are not only its greatest strength, but also the source of its principal weakness. To an outsider, those who produce its programmes seem to devote so much time and effort to the visual impact aspect of their work that they have been unable to develop their analytical talents to anything like the same degree. . . . they are very good at showing us what is happening, but much less effective at telling us why. And if a subject has little or no visual potential it is far too often overlooked completely.

In a recent edition of *Broadcasting*, the president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce spoke of the problem of bias in television reporting, or what he termed "misimpression", a wrong perception of the facts resulting from only partial information.<sup>18</sup> Others have accused it of being over-simplified, or lacking depth or range, and of encouraging a "showdown" approach to problem-solving. H.I. Schiller, a teacher of communications and economics at the University of California, sees the apparent diversity of the media's content as an intentional manipulation of social reality, a plot by the "mind managers" to package the consciousness of the unwitting consumer of cultural images:

As presented by the national message-making apparatus, conflict is almost always an *individual* matter, in its origin. The social roots of

conflict just do not exist for the cultural, informational managers . . . role identification is divorced from significant social changes.

On a strictly commercial level, the presentation of social issues creates uneasiness in mass audiences, or so audience researchers believe. To be safe, to hold onto as large a public as possible, sponsors are always eager to eliminate potentially "controversial" program material.<sup>19</sup>

Television is also accused of distorting the truth through its use of stereotyped images: thus a policeman becomes the symbol for authority, and a long-haired student radical, the youth of today. And the camera, focussing on a scene of activity, can produce an erroneous interpretation of the facts of a situation:

What is notable about media reporting of violence is the bias, the stress given those things which titillate, which entertain, which pander to the tastes currently fashionable: in other words, on the surface sensations of the single events of theatrical value. . . . News reporting is still very much action-oriented, ignoring the fact that present-day reality does not organize itself into neat compartments. . . . Because there is no sense of proportion to news reporting of violence, because of that stress on immediacy presented with a glossy superficiality, the average consumer is almost compelled to indulge in gross over-simplification.<sup>20</sup>

Television officials are understandably sensitive to the recurrent vocal criticisms of violence in news programming. As the Eisenhower Commission on the causes and prevention of violence discovered, broadcast executives consider the elimination of the reporting of violent events to be "suppression of information" and an abridgement of the "freedom of our news department to report the news as we see it."<sup>21</sup> For these men the visualization of violent acts is an essential part of the newsgathering process: violence exists in society and must be reported.

Small reports that violence on newscasts has a strange and remarkable impact, considering the extent of its occurrence. Despite the fact that actual on-air presentation of violent acts is rare, because such images are so vivid they are retained in the viewer's memory. He also cites figures on the percentage of violent activity broadcast by the three U.S. networks in their coverage of the 1968 Chicago convention: NBC, less than 3%, CBS, also less than 3%; ABC, 1.1%. In fact, in the whole of 1968, of all the material presented by ABC news, only 9% was associated with violence.<sup>22</sup>

## THE ENLARGED PERSPECTIVE—DOCUMENTARY PROGRAMMING

Documentary programming which can combine factual evidence, in-



formed opinion, and various dramatic devices is often presumed to have an editorial function. Information about the real world is given extended treatment by means of actuality coverage, feature interviews, fictional reconstructions of past events, or even postulations of a future "reality".

John Grierson, who was Canada's first Film Commissioner and the creator of the National Film Board of Canada, has spoken of the early history of the documentary.<sup>23</sup> He considered Robert Flaherty's "Nanook of the North" (1921) to be not only one of the first but also one of the most notable uses of film for "the creative treatment of actuality." (Grierson, having perceived that the motion picture offered enormous possibilities for the dramatization of actual observations and that it could be utilized as a "melter and moulder of opinion and imagination in modern society," convinced first the British and then the Canadian governments to permit him to establish a facility for the production and distribution of documentary films.)

Because of the power of film to shape public opinion it has often been accused of deliberately tampering with the facts—which it did, of course, for propaganda purposes during time of war. The film-maker, however, contends that if there is distortion it exists "in favour of the essential truth which he is trying to convey."<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, it is the function of the film editor to make pleasing and appropriate juxtapositions between sound track and picture, a kind of "distortion" essential to the craft.

As information leaves the realm of actuality or straight reporting in order to treat a subject in depth, it enters the more creative dramatic domain with its allowance for a certain degree of poetic licence. Nevertheless, the documentarist has a responsibility never to stage-manage the facts in order to create a wrong impression—the techniques he employs should only be used to reveal what is natural and true, not to bear false witness.<sup>25</sup>

Television journalists who make use of the documentary format in the treatment of controversial issues have expressed their basic commitment to serve the public interest as objectively as possible. The president of the Canadian Television Network (CTV) has outlined the rights and obligations of the broadcaster in programming topics of public concern:

1. The broadcaster has the right and the responsibility to examine and report on every aspect of today's society. One of his major purposes must be to stimulate public interest in events and conflicts of every-day life. . . .
2. The right to report on society has inherent with it a responsibility to

use all reasonable care and all available professional skill in the examination and treatment of the subject matter.

3. The examination must strive for balance and objectivity in its appraisal of the subject matter as it exists, and as it exists within a prepared programme. Employment of human resources implies that judgements as to the degree of objectivity exercised by producers or journalists may not be universally shared.

4. The right to treat, or the responsibility to treat, any subject within the body politic may include the right to be wrong presuming that all reasonable efforts have been expended to examine all relevant facts which are generally available.

5. The broadcaster has the right after all reasonable and zealous examination to deal with any inequity, injustice or impropriety occurring in his society in what might be categorized as an editorial manner in which judgements are made and conclusions are put forward. This right requires, however, that the producer must include in his preparation a recognition of the other side of the question.<sup>26</sup>

The broadcaster's power to influence public opinion is also constrained by a number of factors which act to ensure that he operates within the public interest.<sup>27</sup> These include the training and supervision of program staff at all levels and throughout each aspect of the creative process; the fact that television is a competitive medium, subject to audience ratings, making the public itself "a conditioning factor in terms of acceptance of the attitudes of a programme"; and the criticisms of the daily press.

It is television's competitive factor that raises doubts about the documentary's ability to provide fair, objective treatment of a subject. The question is often raised whether the public must be stimulated in order to respond to the communications media, whether the documentary must create an impact in order to engage people's concern for a particular problem:

"Talking heads" in public affairs programming is not viable today. . . . It is not sufficient to have two experts holding different points of view talk at one another, because unless they have dramatic personalities and a conflict arises in which the classic confrontation takes place, which can be dramatic and exciting, the public properly demands more. They want to see visual evidence and visual presentation of the issue in order to justify it. Impact is a valid requirement of useful contributory programming.<sup>28</sup>

## THE MANIPULATION OF INFORMATION—MEDIA BLACKMAIL

In their search for newsworthy material, the information media tend to favor the depiction of events "which disrupt the cohesion of a society (whether they are matters of scandal or of violence) and provide instant interest and audience involvement."<sup>29</sup> And television, having to compete with the other mass media, seeks to focus on the human experience at the centre of each news story.

These factors have made television in particular highly susceptible to a phenomenon known as media blackmail, in part created by the medium itself, generally unintentionally, as it attempts to structure complex reality into simple and clearly perceptible visual images, and in part entirely deliberately by the newsmakers' manipulation of the medium. Also, the mere reporting of an event by the medium "imparts a certain respectability, a certain acceptability."<sup>30</sup>

The power of television to determine what shall seem important and what shall be neglected in what Walter Lippman has termed the "incredible medley of fact, propaganda, rumour, suspicion, clues, hopes and fears," has made it the target of those seeking to manipulate the medium for purposes of promoting their own interests and ideologies.<sup>31</sup>

There have been numerous examples in the recent past of criminals, political fugitives, kidnappers, assassins, and radical dissenters directing and controlling media attention to their activities, whether by means of press conferences and communiques, or by demanding that popular media figures serve as hostages or mediators in their disputes with authority. Media-aware dissidents, as part of their strategy, enlist television as an ally, a mechanism for achieving visibility:

The media—just because they exist—make a difference in political life. . . . Mass media exposure is a prerequisite for participation in the thought life of society; all evidence shows that high media consumers are both more likely to hold opinions on a variety of matters and to perceive possibilities of which others not so exposed are unlikely to be aware. . . . In a similar way, the coverage of events promotes awareness of such events, and the fuller the coverage the larger the size of the attentive public.<sup>32</sup>

But it is not only protesters who have recognized the ability of the media to magnify the significance of trivial incidents and of minor figures into something eminently newsworthy. Political figures have made use of television to tell their side of a story (particularly through the press conference and the news release), and television journalists have not hesitated on occasion to comment on the policies of those in authority.



## PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES

When broadcasting began it had to share its role as cultural broker with the record industry, the cinema, the popular performing arts, and the newspaper.<sup>33</sup> The initial problem facing the new medium was, how to address its audience. On the entertainment side, television borrowed heavily from radio, film, and the theatre; the information aspect took its cues from the written press and traditions of photojournalism.

The best assurance of any medium's depiction of reality should be found in the standards established by its professional practitioners and for television newsmen the appropriate standards have traditionally been sought in the journalists' code of ethics. The unanswered question is how workable are such standards for complex electronic journalism.

The professional journalist is a seeker after truth. To quote Lippman again, "The press . . . is like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness, into vision."<sup>34</sup> In 1947, the Commission for a Free and Responsible Press set forth five goals for the press so it could discharge its obligation to provide the information the public has a right to know. These were:

1. A truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning.
2. A forum for the exchange of comment and criticism.
3. A means of projecting the opinions and attitudes of the groups in the society to one another.
4. A method of presenting and clarifying the goals and values of society.
5. Full access to the day's intelligence.<sup>35</sup>

Although the wording of these prescriptions seems to have been colored by the circumstances of World War Two, the major implication is the necessity of providing precise and factual information. In the intervening years, the uses and abuses of the written and electronic press have been the subject of lengthy and on-going debates concerning professional responsibility and freedom of expression:

Many news editors and their staffs seem willing to rethink and redefine their procedures for reporting disorders; but they always jealously safeguard their rights, citing the freedom of the press, the right of the public to know and make its own decisions, and the responsibility of the "fourth estate" to report fully, fairly, and responsibly without prior restraint by any public authority. To paraphrase one newspaper editor:

any code established by the media itself is a policy; any code imposed from the outside is censorship.<sup>36</sup>

The guidelines imposed by the profession generally place great emphasis on traditional good reporting practices such as verification of information, balanced presentation that conforms to the facts, moderation in reporting crime and violence, avoidance of sensationalism, and respect for privacy—in other words, accuracy, restraint, and correct attribution.<sup>37</sup>

To go beyond these criteria, however, is to enter the debate on freedom of expression. Perhaps, as has been said, propaganda is whatever you don't agree with and, therefore, something to be suppressed. The Hutchins Commission, in the appendix to its report on freedom of the press, speaks of "limits to the legal toleration of abuse of the liberty of expression" and of the fact that while the press must be accountable to the community it serves, the overall social responsibility for the quality of press service rests with the public:

A free press is not a passing goal of human society; it is a necessary goal. For the press, taken in sum, is the swift self-expression of the experience of each moment of history; and this expression ought to be true. Much of the content of the press is intended solely for its own day; and the journalist sometimes reflects that his art is one of improvisation, and that its products, being destined to pass with the interest of the moment, require no great care in their workmanship. Yet, just because it is the day's report of itself, it is the permanent word of that day to all other days. The press must be free because its freedom is a condition of its veracity, and its veracity is its good faith with the total record of the human spirit.

At the same time, freedom of the press is certainly not an isolated value, nor can it mean the same in every society and at all times. It is a function within a society and must vary with the social context. It will be different in times of general security and in times of crisis; it will be different under varying states of public emotion and belief. . . . The press itself is always one of the chief agents in destroying or in building the bases of its own significance.<sup>38</sup>

## **La représentation de la réalité par les media d'information**

A l'origine, "nouvelles" signifiaient essentiellement "nouveau-tés" ou mise au courant des événements récents. Le mot "journal" n'a pas été utilisé avant le milieu du dix-septième siècle. Les producteurs de gazettes et de

"newsletters" ont commencé à concentrer leurs efforts pour assurer une chronique des événements de façon plus rapide et plus directe. Les "scouts" étaient embauchés pour recueillir les informations destinées à être réunies dans des "feuilles de nouvelles" par les journalistes de l'époque, qui étaient de façon variée connus sous le nom de "coranteers", "diurnalists", "nouvellistes", "gazetteers" et "mercuristes".<sup>1</sup>

Le service de nouvelles dont nous bénéficions aujourd'hui, que ce soit par les journaux, la radio ou la télévision, doit beaucoup à quelques améliorations techniques qui apparurent vers le début de la première moitié du dix-septième siècle; que ce soit le perfectionnement de la presse à imprimer manuelle (inventée par Gutenberg en 1440) grâce à l'utilisation de la vapeur en 1810, l'utilisation du système télégraphique pour l'envoi de messages vers 1830, ou la création du premier service de transmission par fil en 1846.<sup>2</sup> Avec le temps, les media d'information ont mis au point un certain nombre de critères généralement acceptés pour sélectionner les faits et les méthodes de présentation les mieux appropriés. Anthony Smith, dans *The Shadow in the Cave*, en propose huit:

1. La "recency" (la nouveauté) de l'événement qui "suppose un parti pris formel contre l'explication des événements antérieurs qui ont conduit à un nouveau développement";
2. La pertinence géographique (intérêt pour le public à qui l'information est destinée) qui "suppose un parti pris favorable du côté des autorités": spécialement à travers les nouvelles nationales, et favorise "les activités gouvernementales de ses principales personnalités . . . [et] des gens et des choses les mieux connus";
3. La continuité des sujets bénéficiant de développement, particulièrement si cela appuie, renforce l'attente de l'auditoire;
4. Un appel à un auditoire massif à travers des sujets appartenant à des formules usuelles et qui confirment des images stéréotypées;
5. Des événements qui sont technologiquement appropriés au "medium", par exemple, la télévision exige "des rituels dramatiques pouvant être filmés: processions, désastres, des sujets qui entraînent la présence de visages accablés de douleur, des écroulements d'immeubles, de grands incendies et des fêtes. Ces sortes de sujets bénéficieront toujours d'une sorte de prééminence imaginative sur les sujets qui se rapportent aux finances, ou à l'éducation et qui sont très difficiles à traiter en termes visuels";
6. La structure de la programmation des nouvelles—"les sujets seront sélectionnés dans la mesure où ils aident à fournir des rapports de formes à travers la structure. . . . comme dans tout autre travail de création narrative";
7. Le traitement non-spécialiste ou interdisciplinaire—les "reporters mettront l'accent sur les aspects les plus facilement compréhensibles



de la situation, ainsi que sur les éléments 'humains' et non-techniques";

8. "Ce que l'on pense être les dispositions dominantes du public à ce moment-là."<sup>3</sup>

L'utilisation de tels critères, basés sur certaines "conventions et conditions évidentes et bien connues" du medium de communication a contribué à renforcer certaines critiques habituelles de la télévision comme medium journalistique:

La nature de la présentation audio-visuelle et du montage tend, à la fois, à intensifier et à niveler les aspects les plus superficiels et viscéraux des conflits et des confrontations de notre civilisation. . . .

A mesure que le niveau d'irrationalité d'un événement croît, l'enregistrement par la télévision fait "chauffer" les images; la caméra commence à remplacer l'accélération du mouvement tel qu'il s'effectue par l'image des forces en action, dans la situation immédiate qu'elle est supposée enregistrer.

Le medium, sans aucun doute, tend à récompenser à la fois la personnalité et la capacité à être personnalisé de ceux qui sont engagés, ou plus simplement présents dans les nouvelles.<sup>4</sup>

Les media d'information nord-américains sont également embarrassés par le fardeau que représente le fait d'être, suivant les mots de Robert Baker et Sandra Ball, directeurs du "Task Force on Mass Media and Violence",<sup>5</sup> "les institutions centrales du processus de communication inter-groupe".

Les auteurs de ce Rapport à la "(U.S.) National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence", citent notamment Walter Lippman à propos de la responsabilité impressionnante de la presse dans la démocratie:

De la façon dont la vérité sociale est organisée de nos jours, la presse n'est pas constituée pour fournir, d'une édition à la suivante, la quantité de savoir que la théorie démocratique de l'opinion publique exige. . . . Quand nous attendons de la presse qu'elle nous fournisse un tel ensemble de vérité, nous avons recours à une norme de jugement erronée. Nous méconnaissions la nature forcément limitée des nouvelles, la complexité sans limites de la société; . . . [et demandons] à la presse d'accomplir ce que le gouvernement représentatif, l'organisation industrielle, et la diplomatie n'ont pas réussi à accomplir. Parce qu'elle agit sur tout le monde trente minutes sur vingt-quatre

heures, on demande à la presse de créer une force mystique appelée "opinion publique" qui résoudrait les problèmes que posent les insuffisances des institutions publiques.

Continuant dans ce sens, le Rapport suggère que "le but de la communication des nouvelles devrait être de réduire l'incertitude et d'accroître la probabilité que le public réagira aux conflits et aux changements d'une façon rationnelle".<sup>6</sup>

Les nouvelles ne sont plus simplement la récitation, sous forme de bulletin, des faits (propres à l'actualité du jour)—violences, désordres, désastres naturels, ou délibérations du corps public administratif. Cela est devenu un genre, une forme de littérature (comme le drame, l'épopée, l'ode, la nouvelle, ou le sermon) avec ses propres conventions de contenu et de forme. La nature du sujet des nouvelles est le rapport des événements, des questions, des conflits et des problèmes du jour. Les techniques employées sont celles de l'investigation, de la mise en évidence et de l'évaluation. Les nouvelles nous fournissent des informations à propos de la "réalité", et cela d'une manière extrêmement comprimée.

Comme les masse media sont devenus techniquement et politiquement plus sophistiqués, les media d'information ont pris naturellement en charge un rôle didactique dans la société. En informant un public massif des événements importants du jour, il créent et soutiennent, en fait, une image nécessairement limitée de la société.

## LES CONTRAINTES CONCERNANT LA REPRESENTATION DE LA REALITE

Les media ne peuvent pas être pris isolément. Ils opèrent sous des systèmes variés de propriété, de gestion et de contrôle dans la société. Le matériel présenté est destiné à intéresser le plus grand nombre d'individus puisés dans un public disponible (et généralement considéré comme un public massif).

L'auditoire est constitué d'individus qui diffèrent par leur âge, leur éducation, leur intérêt, leur degré de sophistication et dont les statuts sociaux et économiques sont très variés. En dépit de ces variables, le but de chaque masse medium est de capter et de retenir l'auditoire le plus large possible. Ce fait implique nécessairement certaines restrictions sur le contenu et le traitement du matériel. D'autres limites sont imposées par les lois gouvernementales, la censure intérieure, les interdictions légales,

la compétition des autres media, les pressions des entreprises commerciales privées, les codes professionnels, et les contraintes créatives et techniques inhérentes à chaque medium.

Anthony Smith et William Small ont chacun discuté quelques unes des innovations techniques qui ont marqué la présentation des nouvelles à la télévision comme une forme de spectacle. Pour Smith, la majorité de ces changements eurent lieu durant la décade 1958-68.<sup>7</sup> Avec l'apparition de la télévision, il ne fut plus possible de lire simplement les communiqués "provenant d'une liasse de nouvelles transmises par les agences de presse". Dans le but de capter et de retenir le public, les nouvelles ont dû être visualisées. Lorsque les informations deviennent plus longues et passent de 15 à 30 minutes, les annonceurs commencent à émerger en tant que figure nationale importante. Le format "magazine" était souvent utilisé pour traiter un sujet; le reportage en manchette de 90 secondes fut allongé pour devenir un item de plusieurs minutes. Les reporters devinrent célèbres grâce à leur style personnel, à leur attitude implacable dans les interviews, spécialement quand ils s'opposaient à des personnalités représentant l'autorité.

Dans son ouvrage *To kill a messenger*, William Small<sup>8</sup> parle du rôle de journaliste comme d'une tentative "de définir ce qui est réel", une autre façon de désigner ce que Walter Lippman considérait comme "la recherche de la vérité pouvant être 'rapportée'":

Un examen des contenus dans la presse quotidienne ou sur les ondes révèle que beaucoup ou presque tout ce que nous appelons nouvelles n'en est pas réellement, en tout cas, pas dans le sens d'événements spontanés. La plupart des 'nouvelles' sont imaginées, implantées, dirigées, gérées, manipulées, mais demeurent tout de même des nouvelles du fait que les hommes qui en font le rapport ne sont pas dirigés, manipulés, ou ne se laissent pas aller à leur imagination. Leur vision est guidée par l'impartialité et l'honnêteté.

Small relate que la première entrevue moderne avec une figure publique d'importance est signalée comme ayant eu lieu entre Horace Greeley et Brigham Young à Salt Lake City en 1859. Il considère cet entretien comme le premier d'une série de dispositifs journalistiques qui fréquemment donnent une forme ou transforment les événements.<sup>9</sup>

L'entrevue conduisit à la conférence de presse et l'initiative passa de la presse à l'homme politique. . . . Un pas de plus au-delà de la conférence de presse—qui permet encore à la presse de poser des questions qui ne font pas toujours plaisir à la personne interrogée—c'est le



communiqué de presse en tant que moyen pour éliminer les questions. Si le communiqué de presse contient des nouvelles, le contenu est très fortement contrôlé par la source. Certainement, la capacité de retenir l'information, le choix du moment de diffusion lui appartient. . . . Le communiqué lui-même, toutefois, n'est pas un événement réel. Il peut être pertinent, il peut être important, il peut reposer sur des événements réels, mais en tant que tel, il est manufacturé.

Avec la venue de la télévision, le reportage de l'information a imposé un "mélange instantané du théâtre et de la propagation de l'actualité".<sup>10</sup> Cette perception des nouvelles a été le sujet de diverses directives en provenance de la direction des institutions de radiodiffusion à leurs employés qui ont virtuellement acquis le statut de politique des nouvelles. La citation suivante<sup>11</sup> est tirée d'un long mémorandum préparé en 1963 par Reuven Frank immédiatement après sa nomination comme réalisateur exécutif à "NBC Evening News":

Chaque sujet jugé apte à une diffusion massive devrait pouvoir, sans aucun renoncement à la probité ou à la responsabilité, recourir aux attributs de la fiction et du drame. Il doit avoir une structure, présenter un conflit, un problème et un dénouement, une action croissante ou finissante, un début, un milieu et une fin. Ce ne sont pas là uniquement les éléments essentiels du drame, mais aussi ceux de la narration.

Le pouvoir le plus important du journalisme télévisé n'est pas la diffusion de l'information mais la transmission d'une expérience . . . joie, désolation, choc, peur, ce sont les matériaux avec lesquels sont formées les nouvelles. . . .

Sa vérité symbolique, son pouvoir d'évocation est renforcé par la soit-disant réalité stimulée par les sons qui l'entourent. Le film n'est pas la réalité mais une illusion, au mieux une imitation de la réalité.

Etant donné qu'il n'y a pas de version définitive des nouvelles, ce qui est rapporté et la manière dont le rapport est effectué dépendent entièrement de la façon dont les media différents (et compétitifs) sélectionnent et organisent le matériel disponible. Ces dernières années, un nombre de critiques des nouvelles télévisées ont copieusement écrit sur le traitement des nouvelles à propos des "considérations institutionnelles" imposées par les réseaux à leurs services de nouvelles. Epstein désigne ces conditions comme des "procédures, systèmes, et politiques destinés à réduire l'imprévisibilité des nouvelles à des dimensions maniables".<sup>12</sup>

Il affirme que la version des nouvelles nationales présentée par la

télévision américaine est sujette à certaines restrictions prévisibles basées sur les coûts connus qui comprennent le temps de présentation sur les ondes et la disponibilité des ressources, que ce soit en personnel ou en équipement. La logique économique de la télévision commerciale renforce le reportage des événements attendus ou de routine, étant donné qu'il faut envoyer une équipe et son matériel suffisamment en avance sur les lieux de l'événement. Ce qui est à l'oeuvre ici est le principe de bénéfices décroissants: un budget fixe est alloué en vue d'un nombre spécifique d'émissions de nouvelles chaque semaine; on peut compter sur un certain nombre d'événements susceptibles de faire la nouvelle, et de personnages en mesure de soutenir des sujets utilisables; on peut également compter sur un quota de reportages filmés indispensables à la production d'une émission de nouvelles équilibrées et "distrayantes"; de plus, on ne dispose ici ni de temps, ni de la possibilité de s'engager dans des recherches pour de l'information originale ou des enquêtes poussées.

La radiodiffusion commerciale fonde également beaucoup de ses décisions sur la théorie de l'"audience flow". Les nouvelles sont présentées de telle façon qu'elles puissent capter l'intérêt du plus grand nombre de spectateurs possibles et les retenir pour la durée entière du bulletin d'information, dans l'espoir qu'ils demeureront sur ce canal pour l'émission qui suivra. On pense que l'attention des téléspectateurs sera prolongée par du métrage filmé concentré sur des images actives. Les questions complexes devront ainsi être rendues par des images visuellement précises, et de préférence réduites en "noir et blanc", avec l'accent porté sur des confrontations hautement dramatiques entre des antagonistes clairement définis:

Les agences de nouvelles exigent une série de règles internes, afin de coordonner les efforts des correspondants, des techniciens, des monteurs et des réalisateurs dans la production des nouvelles, de façon qu'ils restent dans les limites de leur budget, des normes et des horaires. Lippman réfère ces "normes usuelles" comme étant absolument essentielles, afin de réduire, à des proportions maniables, un nombre illimité d'informations possibles.<sup>13</sup>

## "UN MIROIR TENDU A LA SOCIÉTÉ"

Quand la télévision présente les nouvelles, non seulement elle sélectionne une petite partie de ce qui est réellement arrivé, mais elle tend à y ajouter un accent exagéré sur les événements rapportés, en donnant au téléspectateur l'impression de lui présenter un événement actuel se déroulant dans le monde réel, l'invitant à y prendre part en tant qu'observateur privilégié. Pour cette raison, la télévision a quelquefois été

appelée "fenêtre sur le monde". Une autre métaphore également utilisée est celle de miroir de la société, dans la mesure où avec la télévision, la caméra cadre chaque image de façon à lui conserver son impact immédiat:

L'analogie du miroir suggère aussi l'immédiateté: les événements sont reflétés instantanément, tel qu'ils se produisent, à la façon d'un miroir. La notion de "miroir de la société" implique que tout ce qui arrive d'important sera reproduit dans les nouvelles télévisées. Toutefois, les nouvelles des réseaux, loin d'être omniscientes, constituent une opération de ramassage de nouvelles très restreinte.<sup>14</sup>

Epstein explique assez longuement le rôle de la caméra dans cette "résurrection de la réalité". Quand la télévision vous transmet des informations, il est très rare que nous voyions un événement se déployant devant la caméra de transmission directe. A la place, on nous offre une reconstitution filmée d'un sujet de nouvelle à propos de l'événement. Cette réorganisation de la réalité est le plus souvent nécessaire, étant donné que la séquence naturelle des événements est remplie de "digressions, de confusions et de contradictions":

Le montage suppose la sélection de certains segments de film consacrés à un sujet donné et leur arrangement dans un ordre qui semble le mieux donner une vue cohérente de l'événement . . . [ceci] dans le but d'éliminer tous les métrages techniquement inférieurs, de réduire le "bruit" visuel ou la présence d'éléments déroutants . . . [et ainsi extraire] l'action principale des scènes essentiellement inactives.<sup>15</sup>

Plusieurs critiques ont considéré ce procédé qui, après tout, est intrinsèque à la nature de la télévision, comme un élément de distortion:

Les nouvelles tissent un environnement secondaire autour de tous ceux qui les reçoivent. Les nouvelles tendent à mettre en page l'ordre des priorités entre les questions auxquelles la société doit faire face. Elle créent un certain nombre de doutes et encouragent les certitudes de cette société, en les plaçant dans un contexte qui leur est propre.<sup>16</sup>

*The Listener* a récemment publié un commentaire du membre du Parlement britannique Christopher Tugendhat, intitulé "Le miroir déformant de la télévision". Dans cet article, il souligne les forces et les faiblesses de la télévision, en tant que source d'information et d'idées: "La force suprême de la télévision est évidente. Elle est vivante et immédiate. Elle l'est tellement qu'elle peut parfois créer dans l'esprit du



télespectateur l'illusion d'être présente aux événements se déroulant à l'écran, ou même, d'une étrange façon désincarnée, de participer à ces événements."<sup>17</sup>

Le même auteur a commenté l'influence de la télévision dans le retournement de l'opinion américaine à propos de la guerre du Vietnam et de la provocation d'un mouvement d'intérêt et de sympathie pour ses réfugiés. Par ailleurs, si les caméras ne sont pas présentes pour enregistrer un événement, tout se passe comme si celui-ci ne s'était pas produit: "Dans le monde moderne, il semble que la seule réalité soit celle que rapportent les caméras de télévision. Si elles ne sont pas là, rien ne semble avoir d'importance. Si elles y sont, notre intérêt est stimulé et notre conscience impliquée. Mais cela mène à une vue très partielle et déformée du monde".

Il continue en critiquant l'effet simpliste qui résulte de la dépendance excessive entre la télévision et les effets visuels:

La simultanéité et la vivacité de la télévision ne sont pas seulement ses deux plus grandes forces, mais aussi la source de sa principale faiblesse. Pour un profane, ceux qui produisent les émissions semblent consacrer tellement de temps et d'efforts à soigner l'impact visuel de leur travail qu'ils ont été incapables de développer leur capacité d'analyse au même point. . . . ils sont excellents lorsqu'il s'agit de nous montrer ce qui se passe mais beaucoup moins efficaces à nous dire pourquoi. Et, lorsqu'un sujet possède peu ou pas du tout de potentiel visuel, il est trop souvent complètement négligé.

Dans une récente édition de *Broadcasting*,<sup>18</sup> le président de la Chambre de Commerce américaine traita d'un problème de déviation majeure des reportages télévisés: celui de la "fausse impression"; une perception erronée des faits résultant d'une information qui n'est que partielle. D'autres accusèrent l'information télévisée d'être excessivement simpliste, de manquer de profondeur ou de porter et d'encourager une approche antagoniste ("showdown approach") dans les efforts de résolution de problèmes. Le professeur Schiller, qui enseigne les communications et l'économie à l'université de Californie, considère la diversité superficielle du contenu des media comme une manipulation intentionnelle de la réalité sociale, un complot par le "directeur de conscience" en vue de conditionner l'esprit des consommateurs inconscients d'images culturelles:

Tel qu'il est présenté par le dispositif national de fabrication de messages, le conflit est presque toujours une matière *individuelle*, que

ce soit dans ses manifestations ou ses origines. Les racines sociales du conflit n'existent tout simplement pas pour les responsables de la culture ou de l'information. . . . l'identification des rôles est séparée des changements sociaux significatifs.

A un niveau strictement commercial, la présentation des questions sociales crée une inquiétude dans les auditoires de masse, ou du moins les analystes du public pensent ainsi. Pour éviter les risques, pour se saisir d'un auditoire aussi large que possible, les commanditaires sont toujours anxieux d'éliminer les éléments d'émissions pouvant devenir controversiaux.

La télévision est également accusée de distortion de la vérité dans son utilisation d'images stéréotypées: ainsi, un policier devient le symbole de l'autorité, et l'étudiant "de gauche" aux cheveux longs, le reflet de la jeunesse actuelle. Et la caméra, se concentrant sur une scène d'activités, peut produire une interprétation fausse des faits réels qui caractérisent la situation:

Ce qu'il y a de remarquable à propos des media rapportant des actes de violence c'est le parti pris, l'insistance sur les éléments excitants qui divertissent, qui encouragent les goûts à la mode, en d'autres termes, privilégient les sensations de surface provoquées par des événements isolés mais possédant une valeur spectaculaire. La présentation des nouvelles est encore très orientée vers l'action, ignorant le fait que de nos jours, la réalité ne s'organise pas dans des compartiments précis. Parce que le reportage des nouvelles violentes manque de sens des proportions, parce que l'insistance sur l'immédiateté est exploitée avec une superficialité "brillante", le consommateur moyen est presque contraint de se laisser aller à accepter de grossières et intenses simplifications.<sup>20</sup>

Il est compréhensible que les officiels de la télévision soient sensibles aux vives et périodiques critiques provoquées par la violence dans les émissions de nouvelles. Comme l'a découvert la Commission Eisenhower, sur les causes et les préventions de la violence, les gérants des institutions de radiodiffusion considèrent l'élimination des reportages d'événements violents comme une "suppression de l'information" et une restriction de la "liberté des services de nouvelles à rapporter les événements comme ils les perçoivent".<sup>21</sup> Pour ces hommes, la visualisation des actes de violence est une partie essentielle du processus de ramassage des nouvelles: la violence existe dans la société et elle doit être rapportée.

Small remarque que la violence dans les émissions de nouvelles possède un étrange et remarquable impact, si l'on considère la fréquence réduite de ses apparitions. En dépit du fait que la présentation directe d'actes de violence sur les ondes soit extrêmement rare, ces images sont tellement saisissantes qu'elles se fixent dans la mémoire des spectateurs. Il cite également<sup>22</sup> des pourcentages de diffusion d'actes violents par les trois réseaux américains dans leur couverture de la Convention de Chicago en 1968: NBC présenta moins de 3%, CBS également moins de 3%, ABC, 1.1%. En réalité, dans toute l'année 1968, de tout le matériel présenté aux nouvelles de ABC, seulement 9% était associé à la violence.

## UNE PERSPECTIVE ELARGIE—LA PROGRAMMATION DOCUMENTAIRE

La programmation documentaire, qui peut allier les évidences factuelles, les opinions informées et les divers moyens dramatiques, est souvent appelée à avoir une fonction éditoriale. L'information concernant le monde réel bénéficie d'un traitement extrêmement abondant grâce à la couverture continue de l'actualité, les interviews, les reconstructions fictives d'événements passés, et même parfois la présentation actualisée d'une "réalité" future.

John Grierson, qui fut le premier commissaire du film au Canada et le créateur de l'Office National du Film canadien, a beaucoup parlé des débuts du cinéma documentaire.<sup>23</sup> Il considère le film de Robert Flaherty, "Nanook of the North" (1921) non seulement comme étant le premier en son genre, mais également une des meilleures utilisations du film pour le traitement créatif de l'actualité. Grierson, quand il était étudiant, avait perçu les immenses capacités du cinéma pour dramatiser l'observation directe et les possibilités d'utiliser le film pour faire fusionner et former ("melder and moulder") l'opinion et l'imagination dans notre société moderne. Il réussit à convaincre, par la suite, d'abord le gouvernement britannique, puis le gouvernement canadien, de lui permettre d'organiser les moyens nécessaires d'une production et d'une distribution de films documentaires.

Etant donné ce pouvoir du film de former l'opinion publique, Grierson fut souvent accusé de jouer volontairement avec les faits—comme cela a été délibérément pratiqué en temps de guerre dans un but de propagande. Le cinéaste peut, toutefois, soutenir que s'il y a distorsion, elle existe "en faveur d'une vérité essentielle qu'il essaie de porter".<sup>24</sup> En outre, c'est la fonction du monteur de réaliser des juxtapositions plaisantes et appropriées entre la bande sonore et l'image: c'est là un effort de distorsion qui demeure essentiel à ce métier.



Lorsque l'information quitte le domaine de l'actualité ou du pur reportage dans le but de traiter un sujet en profondeur, il pénètre dans le domaine plus créatif de l'expression dramatique qui suppose une tolérance particulière pour un certain degré de licence poétique. Néanmoins, le réalisateur de documentaires a la responsabilité de ne jamais mettre en scène les faits afin de produire une impression fausse. Les techniques utilisées doivent uniquement l'être pour révéler ce qui est naturel et vrai, non pour bâtir un faux témoignage.<sup>25</sup>

Les journalistes de la télévision qui ont recours à la forme documentaire dans le traitement des questions sujettes à controverse ont exprimé un engagement fondamental à servir l'intérêt public aussi objectivement que possible. Le président du réseau CTV a présenté, dans ses grandes lignes,<sup>26</sup> les droits et les obligations du radiodiffuseur en ce qui a trait à la présentation du sujet intéressant un public étendu:

1. Le radiodiffuseur a le droit et la responsabilité d'examiner et de rapporter tous les aspects de la société actuelle. Un de ses buts le plus important est de stimuler l'intérêt public envers les événements et les conflits de la vie quotidienne.
2. Le droit de donner un compte-rendu de la vie de la société ne peut être séparé de sa responsabilité de procéder, avec tout le soin raisonnable et toutes les habiletés professionnelles disponibles, à l'examen et au traitement de son sujet.
3. L'examen doit s'efforcer d'assurer l'équilibre et l'objectivité de son appréciation du sujet tel qu'il existe, et tel qu'il se trouve à l'intérieur d'un programme organisé. L'utilisation de ressources humaines implique que les jugements portés sur le degré d'objectivité exercé par les producteurs ou les journalistes ne peuvent être universellement partagés.
4. Le droit de traiter ou la responsabilité de traiter n'importe quel sujet pris dans le système politique peut inclure le droit de se tromper, présumant que tous les efforts raisonnables ont été accomplis pour examiner tous les faits pertinents qui sont généralement accessibles.
5. Le radiodiffuseur a le droit, après toute enquête raisonnable et approfondie, de s'occuper de toutes les iniquités, injustices ou inconvenances se produisant dans cette société dans ce qui peut être classé comme un mode éditorial dans lequel des jugements sont effectués et des conclusions mises en avant. Ce droit exige toutefois que le

réalisateur inclue dans sa préparation une connaissance de l'autre côté de la question.

Le pouvoir du radiodiffuseur d'influencer l'opinion publique est également limité par un certain nombre de facteurs,<sup>27</sup> lesquels agissent pour s'assurer qu'ils opèrent dans l'intérêt public. Ceci comprend l'entraînement et la supervision du personnel de programme à tous les niveaux, et à travers chaque aspect du développement créatif; le fait que la télévision est un medium compétitif soumis à la mesure de ses auditoires, fait du public lui-même "un facteur de conditionnement dans la mesure où il accepte ou non les positions d'une émission"; ainsi que la critique de la presse quotidienne.

C'est le facteur de la compétition qui introduit des doutes à propos de la capacité des documentaires à proposer un traitement juste et objectif d'un sujet. La question est souvent posée si le public doit être stimulé en vue de répondre au medium de communication: le documentaire doit-il créer un impact afin que les gens se préoccupent d'un problème particulier?

Aujourd'hui, les "têtes parlantes" ("talking heads") dans les émissions d'affaires publiques ne sont pas viables. . . . Il ne suffit pas d'avoir deux experts représentant deux points de vue différents se parlant l'un à l'autre, à moins qu'ils possèdent des personnalités intenses et dramatiques et qu'un conflit s'établisse dans lequel les modèles classiques de la confrontation pourront prendre place donnant ainsi un caractère dramatique et excitant à l'émission. Le public demande beaucoup plus. Il veut qu'on lui propose des présentations et des preuves visuelles de façon à mieux justifier la question discutée. L'impact est une exigence valable en ce qui concerne les qualités d'une émission capable d'une contribution utile.<sup>28</sup>

## LA MANIPULATION DE L'INFORMATION—LE CHANTAGE DES MEDIA

Dans leur recherche pour obtenir un matériel ayant une valeur de nouvelles, le medium d'information tend à favoriser la présentation d'événements "qui brisent la cohésion d'une société (que ce soit des matières à scandale ou à violence) mais provoque un intérêt intense et un engagement soutenu de l'auditoire".<sup>29</sup> Ayant à concurrencer les autres masse media, la télévision cherche à placer l'expérience humaine au centre de chaque sujet de nouvelle. Ces facteurs ont rendu la télévision, en particulier, sensible à un phénomène qui est connu comme "le chantage des media". Partiellement, cette situation est créée par le medium lui-même, généralement inconsciemment, tandis qu'il tente de structurer une réalité complexe en une simple image visuelle clairement

perceptible; partiellement, c'est une manipulation entièrement délibérée du medium par le préparateur de nouvelles.

William Small parle également de l'inter-relation de la télévision et du "monde réel". Le simple reportage d'un événement par un medium "accorde une certaine respectabilité, une certaine acceptabilité".<sup>30</sup> Le pouvoir de la télévision à déterminer ce qui semblera important et ce qui sera négligeable<sup>31</sup> dans ce que Walter Lippman a nommé le "mélange incroyable des faits, de propagande, de rumeurs, de soupçons, d'indices, d'espoirs et de peurs", en a fait la cible de ceux que cherchent à manipuler le medium afin de promouvoir leur propre intérêt et idéologie.

Il y a eu énormément d'exemples, dans un passé récent, de criminels, de fugitifs politiques, de ravisseurs, d'assassins et de rebelles dirigeant et contrôlant l'attention provoquée par les media au bénéfice de leurs activités, que ce soit par le moyen de conférences de presse et de communiqués, ou en demandant à des figures populaires des media de servir d'otages ou de médiateurs dans leurs querelles avec l'autorité. Les dissidents conscients des pouvoirs des media considèrent comme faisant partie de leur stratégie le fait d'enrôler la télévision dans leur camp, de s'en servir comme d'un mécanisme pour accéder à la visibilité:

le medium—simplement du fait de son existence—apporte un grand changement dans la vie politique. . . . Etre exposé par les masse media est un pré-requis indispensable à la participation au mouvement des idées de la société; toutes les évidences prouvent que les grands consommateurs de media sont, ensemble, plus aptes à retenir des opinions sur une variété de sujets et à percevoir des possibilités que d'autres, moins exposés aux media, ne peuvent concevoir. . . . De la même façon, la couverture des événements forme la conscience de ces événements et plus la couverture est complète, plus la taille du public attentif est grande.<sup>32</sup>

Mais il n'y a pas que les protestataires qui ont reconnu la capacité du media à amplifier la signification d'incidents intrinsèquement triviaux et de figures mineures jusqu'à en faire des éléments de nouvelle importants. Les hommes politiques ont utilisé la télévision pour raconter leur version d'un sujet (particulièrement au moyen de conférences de presse et de communiqués de nouvelles) et les journalistes de la télévision n'ont pas hésité, à l'occasion, à plaider en faveur ou à dénigrer les politiques de ceux qui assuraient l'autorité.

## LES LIGNES DIRECTRICES PROFESSIONNELLES

A sa naissance, la radiodiffusion a dû partager son rôle de "courtage



culturel"<sup>33</sup> avec l'industrie du disque, le cinéma, les arts populaires de la scène et les journaux. Le problème initial qu'a dû affronter le nouveau medium était celui de savoir de quelle façon s'adresser à son auditoire. Du côté du divertissement, la télévision a beaucoup emprunté à la radio, au cinéma et au théâtre; quant à l'information, les modèles ont été pris dans la presse écrite et dans les traditions du photo-journalisme.

La meilleure assurance qu'un medium représente la réalité, quel que soit le medium, devrait se trouver dans les normes établies par ses professionnels: pour les journalistes de la télévision, les normes appropriées ont été traditionnellement puisées dans le code d'éthique des journalistes de la presse écrite. La question demeure sans réponse lorsqu'il s'agit de savoir dans quelle mesure ces normes sont applicables aux procédés complexes du journalisme électronique.

Le journaliste professionnel est un chercheur de vérité. Pour citer encore Lippman: "La presse est comparable au rayon d'un projecteur qui se déplace sans arrêt tirant un épisode puis un autre de l'ombre, pour le mettre bien en vue."<sup>34</sup>

En 1947, la Commission pour une presse libre et responsable a assigné cinq tâches à la presse, de sorte qu'elle puisse remplir les obligations de fournir l'information à un public qui a le "droit de savoir":

1. Un compte rendu véridique, exhaustif et intelligent des événements du jour placés dans un contexte qui leur donne tout leur sens.
2. Un "forum" pour un échange de commentaires et de critiques.
3. Un moyen de lancer les opinions et les attitudes des groupes formant la société en direction les uns des autres.
4. Une méthode de présentation et de classification des buts et des valeurs de la société.
5. Un accès complet à tout ce qui favorise la compréhension du quotidien.

Bien que la rédaction de ces prescriptions semble avoir été quelque peu colorée par les circonstances de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale, l'implication majeure qui en découle concerne la nécessité de fournir des informations précises et fondées sur des faits.

Au cours de la période qui a suivie, l'emploi et les abus de la presse écrite et électronique ont été le sujet de longs débats concernant les responsabilités professionnelles et les problèmes associés à la liberté d'expression:

Plusieurs éditeurs de journaux de même que leurs employés semblent

prêts à vouloir repenser et redéfinir leur façon de rendre compte des événements violents; mais il protègent toujours jalousement leurs droits, prenant à témoin la liberté de presse, le droit du public de savoir et de choisir et la responsabilité de la presse à rapporter complètement, impartialement, et sans avoir à subir des contraintes imposées par les autorités publiques. Pour paraphraser un éditeur de journal: tout code établi par le medium lui-même est une politique; tout code imposé de l'extérieur est une censure.<sup>36</sup>

Les grandes lignes que la profession s'impose mettent généralement l'accent sur les pratiques d'un bon reportage, telles que la vérification de l'information, une présentation équilibrée, conforme aux faits, la modération dans les reportages sur le crime et la violence, la limitation de la recherche du sensationnalisme et le respect de la vie privée—en d'autres mots, l'exactitude, la prudence et l'attribution précise.

Allez au-delà de ces critères et vous tombez dans le débat de la liberté d'expression. Peut-être, comme on l'a dit, la propagande serait-elle tout ce que vous n'approuvez pas et qui, par conséquent, doit être supprimé. La Commission Hutchins,<sup>38</sup> en appendice à son "Rapport sur la liberté de la presse", parle de "limites à la tolérance légale envers les abus de la liberté d'expression" et souligne le fait que si la presse doit rendre des comptes à la communauté qu'elle sert, la responsabilité sociale pour la qualité des services de la presse repose, elle, sur le public:

Une presse libre ne représente pas un but passager de la société humaine, c'est un but indispensable. . . . Car la presse prise comme un tout, constitue l'expression rapide de l'expérience de chaque moment de l'histoire: et cette expression doit être vraie. . . . La majeure partie du contenu de la presse n'est préparée que dans le but de respecter son jour de parution et le journaliste laisse voir que son art est fait d'improvisation et que ses productions, destinées à passer avec les préoccupations du moment, n'exigent pas un travail méticuleux. Néanmoins, justement parce qu'il est le compte-rendu du jour par lui-même, il demeure ce que ce jour a dit de permanent à tous les autres jours. La presse doit demeurer libre car sa liberté est la condition de son exactitude et sa véracité est la garantie de son respect pour tout ce qu'a produit l'esprit humain.

De même, la liberté de presse n'est certainement pas une valeur isolée. Elle ne peut pas signifier la même chose dans chaque société et à des périodes différentes. C'est une fonction à l'intérieur d'une société donnée et elle doit varier avec le contexte social. Elle sera différente dans une époque de sécurité complète ou dans un temps de crises;

elle sera différente sous des états variés du sentiment public et de ses convictions. . . . La presse elle-même est toujours un des "agents principaux" de toute destruction ou de toute construction qui touche les fondements de sa propre signification.

## **CRTC background paper: Criticizing television**

### **THE MODEL OF LITERARY CRITICISM**

Television is undoubtedly the dominant entertainment and information vehicle of our time. Yet we often hear television censured whether for depicting explicit scenes of sex or violence, for using profane or obscene language, or for accustoming the viewer to acts of political or criminal aggression. The publication of studies detailing the medium's inordinate influence on impressionable viewers (due in part to its presence in the home environment) has resulted in strident calls for media censorship, even from the political arena. Such demands touch upon extremely sensitive areas and are derived from conflicting opinions of what constitutes objectionable programming.

As a medium which triggers almost daily controversies over content, television is subject to a lot of negative comment. It seems that a disproportionate amount of attention is paid to the dysfunctional aspects of programming with an attendant neglect of its positive features. Benjamin DeMott, the novelist and critic, has argued<sup>1</sup> that "isolated moral protests, flareups of 'concern', and gestures of despair" are ineffective at counter-acting our particular objections to what is presented on television.

We can, however, obtain some measure of the medium's cultural and social significance with the help of existing tools of assessment. If the quantity of programming available simultaneously is no longer within manageable proportions, at least for the individual observer, it is all the more important to profit from the techniques and principles of developed disciplines. The intention of this essay is to propose that literary criticism in particular can provide a serene environment in which to examine television's frenetic and continuous flow.

The purpose of criticism is to provide a better understanding of the qualities and character of an artistic work. But this does not mean rendering censorious judgments or the measuring of a work against some "ideal" standard. Northrop Frye refers to the critic's task as being one of appreciation: "criticism has no business to react against things, but should show a steady advance toward indiscriminating catholicity."<sup>2</sup> In terms of literary creation, the critic's role is to mediate between author



and audience, to interpret or reconstruct the artist's vision and make it more accessible to the reader. Paul de Man expresses this process in its simplest terms when he states that the critic is merely an experienced reader.<sup>3</sup>

At the levels of theme and style television programming, as a work of human creation intended for an audience, is certainly amenable to critical analysis. Television programs represent a rich repository of images and values shared daily by millions of viewers. But we are not yet sufficiently "experienced" as viewers to know how these messages shape our perceptions of society and ourselves. Literary criticism can provide us with structures of thought and knowledge which are adaptable to the medium, as well as a thorough understanding of the evolution of genres, myths, and symbols.<sup>4</sup>

In the distant past, the significant aspects of a culture were disseminated through simple stories narrated or staged before ritual gatherings of the entire community. With time, this oral tradition was largely supplanted by a written one, which ensured the preservation for future generations of complex myths of social belief and concern. The advent of video technology merely indicated a further change in the processes and tools of cultural fabrication. And although television may share the goals and function of ritual and drama, it is, at the same time, governed by the powerful and stringent forces of modern business and complex technology.

One of the most obvious constraints, at least in the North American context, is television's commercial basis. (Advertisers recognized early the medium's ability to inform and influence viewers.) The complex industrial process of creating and marketing audio-visual products for television has considerably altered the once simple relation between artist, work of art, and public. For this reason, many balk at the suggestion that television programming is a valid expression of the creative imagination. There are complaints that much of the programming is low in quality, the product of a ratings-dominated system that produces programs which are banal, trivial, stereotyped, and repetitious; that in order to satisfy the medium's voracious appetite for material, each year episodes are turned out by the dozen, assembly-line fashion. Despite these restrictions, television is not devoid of content that can and does generate emotional involvement and communicate ideas and attitudes to vast audiences.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout recorded history each generation has assessed its cultural products in relation to contemporary perceptions of human experience. The theatre director in Shakespeare's time supervised every aspect of

production and was personally acquainted with each member of the cast and stage crew. Similarly, the nineteenth century publisher was familiar with the editorial problems of each work he issued. The highly mechanized processes of cultural creation common to film and television production have resulted in a loss of creative accountability. Due to the speed with which the credit titles are rolled past on the screen, the ordinary viewer can not even identify those who have put together the cultural products he is consuming.<sup>6</sup>

When television began in the '50s it was possible for the critic to grasp the actual and potential capabilities of this new medium by observing the one or two channels available to him. Today, however, the amount of material being broadcast simultaneously prohibits exhaustive and detailed criticism. Even with four or five sets in operation at the same time, the viewer is unable to cope with the inundation of signals, when there may be as many as fifteen services from which to select.

In television, where the critic's field of study is the multiple and continuous flow of disparate images, perhaps the most useful attainment is the ability to distinguish between the different products offered. The obvious applicability of the critical practice of categorization is described in Northrop Frye's epigrammatic phrase: "Thanks to the Greeks, we can distinguish tragedy from comedy in drama."<sup>7</sup> If the broadcasters who are responsible for transmitting the programs and commercial messages admit they can no longer monitor their entire output, is it any wonder the television critic is unable to manage? Even the uniformity of much of the programming—the monotonous plots, the indistinguishable characterizations, the recurrent topics—is not a simplifying factor. And the ephemeral nature of the broadcast product denies the television critic any ready means of retrieval, an essential requirement if his consideration is to be thorough. Perhaps for these reasons, although a great deal is written about television, much of it takes the form of a daily or weekly consumer guide to the current offering. Television columnists scan the schedules, record their impressions of the programs they sample, and supply background information on numerous other productions. Such comments serve as a useful and almost necessary adjunct to viewing activities and assist us in our choice of programming. The writers who provide this service deserve recognition for a job generally well done. But this work needs to be complemented by precise studies of programming trends; by interpretations of television's assumptions about society; by assessments of the entire body of work by individual producers; and even, by the development of a system of international comparison for this medium in which the circulation of models and material is constantly accelerating.

## THE CRITICAL TOOLS

To suggest that it is possible to relate the work of literary critics to discussions about the programming we view on television, is simply to propose that we not neglect the serious efforts of those who have developed a body of critical thought. Two approaches to the study of literature which have specific relevance to the topic of this symposium are the ethical and the archetypal. The first is taken by those who choose to consider literature for its moral applications to humanity, while the second approach is concerned with underlying human or social patterns that recur in particular works of literature, regardless of the era or culture that produced them.<sup>8</sup>

Ethical criticism functions to advise and guide; its intention is to rank works of literature according to a definable set of standards. In the past the criteria for judging a work of art were derived from traditional religious virtues, whether Christian or classical. In this century, the standard by which art is evaluated is its relation to humanity or the social order. T.S. Eliot speaks of the critic's role as one of evaluating art in terms that speak to the contemporary generation; the artist's place or importance can only be judged in terms of the tradition in which he has created. For him literature is a continuous process: "art never improves, but the material of art is never quite the same."<sup>9</sup>

Irving Babbitt sees the critic's relation to the creator in terms of a higher standard. What is unique about the creative imagination must be judged with reference to the universal. Originality needs to be considered according to the restrictive and selective principles of value. When Frye discusses ethical criticism, he does so in terms of the value of culture to broad civilizational ends. Works of art have a "sequence of meanings" and contain certain symbols or motifs that can be applied according to various theories of criticism to reveal a number of relations to other creative expressions as well as to different human and social expectations:

The goal of ethical criticism is transvaluation, the ability to look at contemporary social values with the detachment of one who is able to compare them in some degree with the infinite vision of possibilities presented by culture. . . . Most ethical action is a mechanical reflex of habit: to get any principle of freedom in it we need some kind of theory of action, theory in the sense of *theoria*, a withdrawn or detached vision of the means and end of action which does not paralyze action, but makes it purposeful by enlightening its aims.<sup>10</sup>

The impetus for archetypal criticism is to be found in the studies of ritual



and dream by the anthropologist Sir James Fraser and the psychologist Carl Jung. Their assertions of the validity of myth and its retention in the social memory represent the two major forces underlying this critical approach. The practitioners of archetypal criticism aim to describe the mythical patterns that dramatize the universal elements in human nature. Their studies of myth demonstrate the highly communicative power of certain basic images that recur in all cultures and eras.

Carl Jung speaks of artistic creation in terms of archetypal symbols "drawn from the realm of human consciousness." The poet assimilates this material and expresses it in such a manner that the reader is made conscious of the presence of the past: "The secret of artistic creation and of the effectiveness of art is to be found in a return to the state of participation mystique—to that level of experience at which it is man who lives, and not the individual, and at which the weal or woe of the single human being does not count, but only human existence. This is why every great work of art is objective and impersonal."<sup>11</sup>

Northrop Frye links the "formulas" or myths of primitive cultures to the recurrence of these patterns in great works of literature. For him the myth serves as a structural device for classifying various fictional modes:

Total literary history gives us a glimpse of the possibility of seeing literature as a complication of a relatively restricted and simple group of formulas that can be studied in primitive culture. . . . The relation of later literature to these primitive formulas is by no means purely one of complication . . . in fact there seems to be a general tendency on the part of great classics to revert to them. . . . The profound masterpiece draws us to a point at which we seem to see an enormous number of converging patterns of significance.<sup>12</sup>

#### TELEVISION'S USE OF THE DRAMATIC GENRE

One of the most useful ways of examining literature is by grouping various works that are analogous in form. Aristotle's *Poetics*, written in the fourth century B.C., was the first disciplined attempt to ascertain the defining properties of literary expression. He identified three genres or literary styles—drama, epic, and lyric—which are distinguished according to the conditions established between the author and his public. Words may be acted in front of a spectator; they may be spoken in front of a listener; or they may be written for a reader.

Although the connection between a speaking poet and a listening audience may have been actual for Homer or Chaucer, with the invention of the printing press this relationship became increasingly theoretical, and

the oral address soon evolved into prose fiction, the genre of the printed page. In drama, the hypothetical or internal characters of the story confront the audience directly, concealing the author from his audience.<sup>13</sup>

In television, the format of visual presentation is as important as verbal expression: virtually any subject may be dealt with in a number of ways ranging from a simple oral report to a complex documentary treatment. Drama, which is comprised of both visual and verbal elements, provides a concrete basis for observing how the tools of literary criticism can be applied to television.

It is not only the obviously theatrical programs such as soap opera, situation comedy, action drama, and made-for-television movies that make extensive use of the dramatic mode. Television news and sports also utilize certain of its characteristics. The analogy of drama and sports is perhaps more obvious, as both are highly conventionalized spectacles intended as public entertainment. The newsman and the dramatist have a common desire to impose order on the flux and confusion of reality. Their work is an act of distillation in which the nonessential facts are omitted in order to catch more closely the truly significant aspects of a situation.

A close study of the dramatic conventions can provide those associated with television with a better understanding of some of the traditional forms which it has borrowed. For instance, the crime shows of prime-time television, in both setting and characterization, often suggest Frye's descriptions of the "demonic imagery" of Dante's *Inferno* or Eliot's "Wasteland,"<sup>14</sup> while their plots are reminiscent of a Victorian melodrama. The earliest manifestations of the dramatic expression of human experience are to be found in the rituals of priest, shaman, and poet, each in his own way attempting to give some form and meaning to the forces at work in man's environment:

If we turn to ritual, we see there an imitation of nature which has a strong element of what we call magic in it. Magic seems to begin as something of a voluntary effort to recapture a lost rapport with the natural cycle. . . . Ritual constructs a calendar and endeavours to imitate the precise and sensitive accuracy of the movement of the heavenly bodies and the response of vegetation to them. . . . It is the expression of a will to synchronize human and natural energies (as at harvest time). . . . But the impetus of the magical element in ritual is clearly toward a universe in which a stupid and indifferent nature is no longer the container of human society, but is contained by that society.<sup>15</sup>

The solemn observance of religious ritual was soon joined to myths of ancestral origin. The resulting complex pattern of moral values, social order, and magical belief was enacted for the community in a spectacle or ensemble performance wherein the concerns and beliefs of the community found symbolic expression.<sup>16</sup>

Kenneth Burke has studied the creative process as the artist's discovery of symbols to express emotions, and as the arrangement of them to communicate experience. In making use of the terms and insights of psychology to interpret literature, he provides the link between the social sciences' emphasis on the dramatization and communication of human experience through ritual, and literary criticism's attempt to ascertain knowledge of the common or universal nature of man as revealed in imaginative constructions.

Burke has suggested that literature provides man with "equipment for living" in society. Human conduct, being in the realm of action, can be readily analyzed in terms of drama. Art forms like tragedy, comedy, and satire show man as he relates in communication with other men—in anxiety, doubt, confusion, love, hate, fear, despair, and hope: "Men relate as actors playing roles. . . . They do so through communication which, like struggle in the drama, involves both competition and co-operation. The difference between symbolic and social drama is the difference between imaginary and real obstacles, but to produce effects on audiences, symbolic drama must reflect the real obstacles of social drama."<sup>17</sup>

The social forces that govern reality—competition, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation—are distilled by the dramatist into a coherent vision or image of human experience. A drama is the intentional particularization of a typical situation. It singles out a pattern of experience, gives it form and hence meaning.

Throughout the more than 2500 years of recorded history of dramatic expression, there have been a number of significant changes in the audience's sense of involvement with the action.<sup>18</sup> At the most literal level of spectacle entertainment, in the gladiatorial combats of the Roman arena, the audience held the actual power of life and death over the people entertaining them. The classical Greek plays, performed in open-air amphitheatres, were familiar national myths presented for the entire community. The audience, while distanced from the action by such devices as the masked players and the intervening chorus, in fact participated in the spectacle through vocal expression of the emotions aroused by the story. The thrust stage of Elizabethan theatre encouraged the direct address of the audience by the actors through asides and



soliloquies. The action was recounted through monologue and dialogue and illustrated by scenes performed on the stage and inner stage. Conventional modern theatre is planned for the proscenium stage: abetted by scenery and costume, the staged events are intended to create an illusion of reality. The proscenium opening is treated as an absent fourth wall. Nevertheless, the action is absolutely isolated from the audience by the stage frame, curtain, and footlights.

By 1910 the new medium of film was beginning to provide direct competition with theatrical spectacle. The central feature of the cinema is the sharp and bright immensity of the screen on which is projected a stream of changing images. The various cinematic devices for movement control, whether by technical means such as cutting, editing, or montage, or by camera or subject movement, alter the picture continuously. The flickering screen holds the viewer's attention, giving him the impression he is surrounded by the action. And the conditions under which a film is viewed, the darkened surroundings, the intense concentration on the visual and auditory sensations, the distortions of "reality" occasioned by fluctuating image size and shot transition, contribute to the powerful visual experience.<sup>19</sup> Each member of the audience experiences the story being presented as if in a state of private reverie.

Television is, of course, the predominant contemporary medium for the presentation of drama. Once again, the viewing experience is different, even from that of the cinema audience. The small size of the screen, the careful centering of the visual image, the commercial intrusions, and the domestic setting in which it is viewed militate against the intense concentration required by complexity of thought or plot. As a result, television almost always presents simplified versions of reality, whether in the predictable plots of family or action drama or in each evening's twenty-minute broadcast of the news of the day. Even more than with cinema, television is an industrial process both in the creation and consumption of its products. The costs of production and distribution are so prohibitive that resources are concentrated on the making of programs in accordance with proven formulas guaranteed to generate immediate results in terms of audience ratings.<sup>20</sup>

Despite these transformations in the means of diffusion, the basic concepts of dramatic presentation have remained constant. All that has really changed is the tone of address. Just as the style of news reporting evolved from formal newsletter and official gazette, through popular broadsheet, to mass circulation daily tabloid, so it is with the seeming transformation of genre, theme, and mode since the theatre of Aeschylus and Euripides.

Although prime-time network television in North America makes extensive use of the dramatic genre, what it presents has little in common with the traditional forms of tragedy and comedy. These dramatic modes as expressed by television have been reduced to the formulas of situation comedy and action drama. The characteristics that these television series emulate most closely are those of farce and melodrama, both of which have lengthy histories as popular forms of mass entertainment.

The popular arts may be defined as those which belong to mass culture and which treat works of art as products to be consumed by a majority of the population. In order to be considered efficient commodities of mass entertainment and amenable to the marketing practices of mass consumption, the "artifact" must be readily adaptable to an industrialized process of manufacture. The formulated use of violence has been endlessly exploited by the popular arts as a device for involving a mass audience.<sup>21</sup>

Many critics have discussed the derivation of current art forms such as the detective story, the western, and the thriller in which violence is used as a means of resolving conflict, suggesting prototypes in the "fine" arts where the violent element functions as a legitimate and integral imaginative quality:

Since the period of the Attic bards adventure narrative has formed the basis and the dynamic force for most of the great stories of Western literature. Consider the skein of adventure that runs from the *Odyssey* through *Don Quixote*, to *Robinson Crusoe*, *David Copperfield* and *Moby Dick*, and perhaps, finally, to that other odyssey, *Ulysses*. But with James Joyce's great novel modern literature appeared to withdraw its interest from what had theretofore been regarded as adventure—the largely physical exploits of heroic characters—in favour of stories of human sensibility and of psychological exploration (some still might say adventure) within the human consciousness. The traditional adventure narrative was, so to speak, abandoned by serious writers and passed down to the literary subculture of the detective story, children's stories, "cheap fiction", and the new popular form of the movies, where, in heroic dramas of the American West, of gangsters, of spies, and of two world wars, it remained the prime source of mass entertainment.<sup>22</sup>

The subject of this symposium is television violence, and the form this most often takes today is the stereotyped plot conventions of the police or crime drama. This dramatic species features the exaggerated and highly simplified distinction between good and evil found in melodrama. The melodramatic convention demands that characters clearly virtuous or

vicious be pitted against each other in sensational situations filled with suspense. It is also characterized by violent appeals to the emotions: the feelings of "pity" and "fear" said to be engendered in the audience by tragedy are exploited to the highest possible pitch of intensity and rendered as pathos and terror.<sup>23</sup>

An essay by R.E. Durnat on the "Ways of Melodrama" provides insight on the characteristics of the melodramatic mode. He distinguishes between "emotional melodrama" (in which there is no real characterization; emotions which in a melodrama serve as the links between melodramatic episodes are here used to bring about not action but another emotion) and "pure" melodrama (the thriller and the run-of-the-mill western). In pure melodrama, the melodrama of pursuit and escape, of threat and self-preservation, the characterization can be relatively simple and superficial but it must, like the situations, convince on its own level. It must be relevant, possessing a context of some significance.<sup>24</sup>

Two themes are important in melodrama: the triumph of moral virtue over villainy, and the consequent idealizing of the moral views assumed to be held by the audience.<sup>25</sup> In discussing what he terms the "misdirection of adventure narrative," Arlen has noted this moralistic approach that television takes to drama:

What is corrupt—or, anyway, amiss—with so much of the narrative one sees on television isn't that there is either too much or too little violence but that most of the action that takes place on the television screen is somehow blurred, muted, transposed behind a gauzy screen of pietism and morality. No matter how much killing or shooting takes place in a detective or Western program, the one note that seems to reverberate through the action is the moral position of the detective or sheriff and the moral position of the program—our storyteller. On the simpler programs, the morality is infused in relatively simple fashion: noble, rational, pro-society figures against wicked, anti-social, if often romantic, criminals. On the more ambitious programs ("Kojak" and "Columbo" among many others) a more complex moral tone pervades the narrative—usually an ill-meshed combination of quasi Freudianism and leftover Christian pietism. Characters can hardly move without being "understood", though it is rarely a deeply felt understanding but, rather, a rhetorical note of moralizing . . . In short, television storytelling seems to speak to us from a void, appealing to the mass audience's need for stories, but then furnishing unfelt and idealized versions of ourselves—and using ideals that are mostly rearward-facing and discredited.<sup>26</sup>



## A NEW DIRECTION FOR TELEVISION CRITICISM

In August 1974, the Aspen Institute sponsored a conference, "Television as a social force—New approaches to TV criticism." The purpose of the Workshop on Television project which sponsored the conference is to stimulate examination of television's impact on society and to encourage serious thought on the medium's potential. Douglass Cater, director of the Institute's program on communications and society, made an urgent plea in the published text of the conference for "thinking people to apply their critical faculties to this medium which reaches greater masses than all the other mass media combined." At this time, when the communications environment is changing so rapidly,

we must give more critical attention to TV than we have given in the past. Too much critical time has been wasted worrying about the worst of television. More attention should be paid to the best, not simply laudatory attention but a systematic examination of style and technique and message. Criticism should also extend its reach beyond the intellectual elite into elementary and secondary schools, where children can be stimulated to think about the medium which so dominates their waking hours. We must endeavour to raise the viewer's capacity to distinguish truth from sophistry.<sup>27</sup>

Richard Adler, co-ordinator of the project, contributed an essay surveying various interpretations of television's impact as a social and cultural force. Over the past twenty-five years, television has become the primary form of entertainment and the most relied-on source of news for most people. It has altered our notions of time and space, abolishing distances and helping to accelerate the pace of history:

Yet even today almost no one takes television seriously. It has become merely another piece of furniture in the home, looked to for the most part to provide undemanding diversion. Its usual blandness and banality, its repetitiveness, its endless commercial intrusions are accepted as inevitable. Outside of a few special-interest groups, the agencies directly concerned with its regulation, and a small body of communications researchers, issues of the nature and content of our television system have been accorded low priority in the national consciousness.

Paradoxically, it may be that the reason television is not taken seriously is precisely because it is so important. It has become so inextricably woven into the social fabric that it is extremely difficult to view it as an institution in its own right.<sup>28</sup>

Television was originally developed by businessmen and technologists fascinated with the potential of this new instrument of communication. Those involved with supplying the content—the programmers, craftsmen, writers, actors, and technicians—were attracted to television from occupations in journalism and the arts. These people tended to draw upon the traditional materials and forms with which they were familiar, making only superficial modifications for the new medium. Only relatively recently have broadcasters learned how to utilize to their best advantage television's unique ability to "touch the 'now' . . . to bring it visually and aurally to the viewer instantly wherever the viewer may be."<sup>29</sup>

Television is both a big business and a highly complex industry. To provide the audience with a completely accurate picture of television would require not only information about the regulatory and production constraints that define the medium, but also a close study of economics, developments in communications technology, and certain elements of law. No critic is skilled in all or even several of these areas.

We must move beyond our preoccupation with the production and transmission processes. The issue of the content of television is not a matter of judging what is good for the masses, but of understanding the critical role played by television in defining and expressing our culture. We need a better understanding of the context television creates. We need to know more about what it tells us about ourselves and the world we inhabit. We need to examine what television has contributed to the ancient traditions of story and drama. We need, most of all, to develop standards appropriate to the medium to enable us to make the kind of discriminations that are the essence of the critical process.<sup>30</sup>

## **La critique de la télévision**

### **LE MODELE DE LA CRITIQUE LITTERAIRE**

La télévision est sans aucun doute le moyen de divertissement et d'information le plus important de nos jours. Et pourtant, on entend souvent critiquer la télévision, que ce soit à cause de scènes explicites de sexualité ou de violence ou d'expressions blasphématoires ou obscènes, diffusées sur ses ondes, ou parce qu'elle habitue le téléspectateur à des actes d'agression politique ou criminelle. La publication d'études décrivant l'influence excessive de la télévision sur des téléspectateurs impressionnables (partiellement à cause de sa présence dans les foyers) a eu pour résultat que des cris stridents, provenant même de l'arène politique, se sont faits entendre en faveur de la censure. De telles demandes touchent à des domaines extrêmement délicats et découlent d'opinions

divergentes quant à ce qui constitue une programmation de qualité discutable.

Etant donné que le contenu des émissions télévisées est presque quotidiennement l'objet de controverses, la télévision est en butte à quantité d'observations défavorables. Il semble que les gens portent une attention démesurée aux mauvais côtés des émissions et négligent ses réalisations positives. Benjamin DeMott, romancier et critique, a soutenu que des "protestations moralistes isolées, des accès d'inquiétude et des gestes de désespoir" sont incapables de contrecarrer les aspects de la télévision auxquels nous nous opposons.<sup>1</sup>

Toutefois, nous pouvons nous faire une certaine idée de l'importance culturelle et sociale de la télévision en utilisant les moyens d'appréciation existants. S'il est devenu impossible de contrôler la quantité des émissions disponibles simultanément, au moins pour l'observateur individuel, est-il encore plus important de profiter des techniques et des principes des disciplines établies. L'objet de cette dissertation est de proposer que la critique littéraire en particulier puisse fournir un milieu serein permettant d'examiner le débit frénétique et continu de la télévision.

La critique a pour objet de fournir une meilleure compréhension des qualités et de la nature d'une oeuvre artistique. Mais ceci ne lui permet pas de porter un jugement de censure ou de mesurer l'oeuvre par rapport à quelque norme "idéale". Northrop Frye écrit que la tâche d'un critique en est une d'appréciation: "le critique ne doit pas réagir contre les choses mais doit plutôt tendre continuellement vers une universalité libre de discrimination".<sup>2</sup> Pour reprendre les expressions de la création littéraire, le rôle du critique est de servir d'intermédiaire entre l'auteur et son auditoire, d'interpréter ou de reconstruire la vision de l'artiste et de la rendre plus accessible au lecteur. Paul de Man réduit ce procédé à sa plus simple expression lorsqu'il affirme que le critique n'est qu'un lecteur d'expérience.<sup>3</sup>

Sur le plan du thème et du style, les émissions de télévision, en tant que création de l'esprit humain destinée à un auditoire, se prêtent certainement à l'analyse critique. Elles représentent une mine d'images et de valeurs que se partagent chaque jour des millions de téléspectateurs. Mais notre expérience comme téléspectateurs n'est pas assez vaste pour que nous puissions savoir comment ces images forment notre perception de notre société et de nous-mêmes. La critique littéraire nous permet, à la fois, de donner à notre pensée et à nos connaissances une structure adaptée à la télévision et de comprendre en profondeur l'évolution des genres, des mythes et des symboles.<sup>4</sup>



Dans le passé, les aspects importants d'une culture étaient disséminés par de simples histoires racontées ou mises en scène au cours des assemblées rituelles de toute la communauté. Avec le temps, cette tradition orale a été supplantée en partie par une tradition écrite qui assurait, pour de futures générations, la préservation des mythes complexes des croyances et des préoccupations sociales. L'avènement de la technique vidéo n'a fait que modifier davantage les procédés et les instruments de fabrication culturelle. Et même si la télévision partage les objectifs et les fonctions du rituel et du drame, elle est aussi régie par les forces puissantes et rigoureuses des affaires et de la technologie complexe du monde moderne.

Une des contraintes les plus évidentes, au moins en Amérique du Nord, est le fondement commercial de la télévision. (Les grandes compagnies ont eu tôt fait de reconnaître la capacité de la télévision d'informer et d'influencer les téléspectateurs.) Le procédé industriel complexe par lequel sont conçues et commercialisées les émissions de télévision a considérablement modifié les relations simples qui existaient jadis entre l'artiste, l'oeuvre d'art et le public. C'est pour cette raison que plusieurs n'acceptent pas l'idée que les émissions de télévision sont une expression valable de l'imagination créatrice. On se plaint que la qualité d'une grande partie des émissions est pauvre en raison du système régi par les cotes d'écoute qui produit des émissions banales, triviales, stéréotypées et répétitives et, qu'en vue de satisfaire l'appétit vorace de la télévision, des émissions sont produites chaque année à la douzaine comme si elles étaient fabriquées par une ligne d'assemblage. Malgré ces restrictions, la télévision n'est pas dépourvue d'émissions qui favorisent l'implication émotive du téléspectateur et qui communiquent des idées et des attitudes à de vastes auditoires.<sup>5</sup>

Tout au long de l'histoire, chaque génération a apprécié ses produits culturels à la lumière des perceptions de l'expérience humaine qui prévalaient à ce moment. Le directeur de théâtre à l'époque de Shakespeare surveillait chaque étape de production et connaissait personnellement chaque membre de la troupe et de l'équipe technique. De même, l'éditeur du dix-neuvième siècle connaissait les problèmes de chaque oeuvre qu'il publiait. Les procédés hautement mécanisés de création culturelle qui sont communs à la production de films et d'émissions de télévision ont supprimé la responsabilité créatrice. A cause de la vitesse à laquelle le générique se déroule sur l'écran, le téléspectateur moyen ne peut même pas identifier les personnes qui ont élaboré le produit culturel qu'il consomme.<sup>6</sup>

Au début de la télévision, dans les années 1950, le critique pouvait

prendre conscience des capacités actuelles et virtuelles de ce nouvel organe d'information en visionnant les émissions qui étaient diffusées sur les quelques canaux qu'il recevait. Aujourd'hui, toutefois, le grand nombre d'émissions qui sont diffusées simultanément empêchent d'en faire une critique exhaustive et détaillée. Même s'il mettait quatre ou cinq téléviseurs en marche au même moment, le téléspectateur serait ahuri par le nombre de signaux qui inonde les ondes, étant donné qu'il aurait à choisir entre au moins quinze signaux en direct.

Dans le domaine de la télévision, où l'étude du critique porte sur la succession multiple et continue d'images disparates, le don le plus utile est peut-être la capacité de faire la distinction entre les différents produits qui nous sont offerts. Une application évidente de la pratique de catégorisation du critique est décrite dans la phrase épigrammatique de Northrop Frye qui suit: "Grâce aux Grecs, nous pouvons distinguer dans le drame la tragédie de la comédie".<sup>7</sup> Si les télédiffuseurs chargés de transmettre les émissions et les messages commerciaux admettent qu'ils ne peuvent plus contrôler leur programmation entière,<sup>8</sup> comment peut-on s'attendre à ce que les critiques soient à la hauteur de la situation? Même l'uniformité d'une grande partie des émissions—intrigues monotones, les personnages indiscernables, les sujets répétitifs—ne simplifie pas les choses. Et la nature éphémère des émissions ne donne pas au critique l'occasion de revoir à plus d'une reprise l'émission qui fait l'objet de sa critique, ce qui est essentiel s'il veut qu'elle soit complète.

Pour ces raisons peut-être, même si on écrit beaucoup sur la télévision, la plupart des critiques sont présentées sous forme de revue quotidienne ou hebdomadaire des émissions offertes. Les critiques examinent les horaires, notent leurs impressions sur les émissions qu'ils visionnent et fournissent des renseignements au sujet d'un grand nombre d'autres productions. De telles observations sont utiles et parfois même nécessaires et nous aident dans notre sélection d'émissions. Les journalistes qui offrent ce service méritent d'être félicités pour leur travail généralement bien fait. Mais ce travail doit être complété par des études précises sur les tendances de la programmation; par des interprétations des hypothèses émises par la télévision sur la société, par des appréciations du travail intégral de chaque producteur et même par l'élaboration d'un système permettant de faire des comparaisons internationales quant à ce médium dans lequel la circulation des modèles et du matériel s'accélère sans cesse.

## LES OUTILS DU CRITIQUE

Quand on songe à la possibilité de relier le travail des critiques littéraires aux discussions au sujet des émissions diffusées à la télévision, on

propose tout simplement de ne pas ignorer les efforts sérieux exercés par ceux qui ont formé la pensée critique. L'approche éthique et l'approche archétype, toutes deux utilisées dans l'étude des littératures, s'appliquent particulièrement bien au sujet de ce colloque. La première approche est celle de ceux qui choisissent d'étudier la littérature en fonction de ses applications morales à l'humanité, tandis que la seconde porte sur les schèmes humains ou sociaux sous-jacents qui reviennent dans certaines oeuvres littéraires, quelle que soit l'époque ou la culture qui les a produites.<sup>9</sup>

La critique éthique veut conseiller et diriger; elle a pour objet de classer les oeuvres littéraires en fonction d'un ensemble défini de normes. Par le passé, les critères selon lesquels on jugeait les oeuvres d'art étaient fondés sur les vertus religieuses traditionnelles, qu'elles soient chrétiennes ou classiques. Aujourd'hui, on évalue les oeuvres d'art en fonction de ses rapports avec l'humanité ou l'ordre social. T.S. Eliot décrit le rôle du critique comme en étant un d'évaluation des oeuvres d'art en des termes qui s'adressent à la jeune génération; la place ou l'importance de l'artiste ne peut être jugée qu'à la lumière de la tradition dans laquelle son oeuvre créatrice se situe. Pour lui, la littérature est un procédé continu: "L'art ne s'améliore jamais mais la forme artistique n'est jamais entièrement la même".<sup>10</sup>

Irving Babbitt voit le rapport entre le critique et l'artiste sur un plan plus élevé. Le caractère unique de l'imagination créatrice doit être jugé en fonction de l'universel. L'originalité doit être étudiée suivant des principes de valeurs restrictifs et choisis. Lorsque Frye parle de critique éthique, il se base sur la valeur de la culture, c'est-à-dire de la civilisation au sens le plus large. Les oeuvres d'art ont une "suite de significations" et contiennent certains symboles ou motifs qui peuvent être appliqués conformément à diverses théories de la critique de façon à révéler un certain nombre de relations à d'autres modes d'expression créatrice ainsi qu'à divers espoirs humains et sociaux:

L'objet de la critique éthique est l'aptitude à considérer les valeurs sociales contemporaines avec le détachement de celui qui est capable de les comparer, dans une certaine mesure, à la vision infinie des possibilités offertes par la culture. . . . La plupart des actes éthiques sont un réflexe mécanique de l'habitude; pour pouvoir y introduire une certaine liberté, nous avons besoin d'une théorie d'action, théorie dans le sens de "théoria", c'est-à-dire la vision éloignée ou détachée des modes et des fins de l'action, qui ne la paralyse pas mais l'oriente en clarifiant ses objectifs.<sup>11</sup>



L'impulsion qui a été donnée à la critique d'archétypes provient des études sur les rituels et les rêves effectuées par l'anthropologue Sir James Fraser et le psychologue Carl Jung. Leurs assertions au sujet de la validité du mythe et de sa rétention dans la mémoire sociale sont les deux forces principales sous-jacentes de cette approche critique. Les praticiens de la critique d'archétypes visent à décrire les schèmes mythiques qui illustrent les éléments universels de la nature humaine. Leurs études du mythe démontrent la puissance hautement communicative de certaines images fondamentales qui sont communes à toutes les cultures et à toutes les époques.

Carl Jung parle de la création artistique en termes de symboles d'archétypes "tirés de la conscience humaine". Le poète assimile ces symboles et les exprime de telle façon que le lecteur est sensibilisé à la présence du passé:

Le secret de la création artistique et de l'efficacité de l'art se trouvent dans le retour à un état de *participation mystique* à ce niveau d'expérience où c'est l'Homme qui vit, et non l'individu, et où le bien-être ou les souffrances d'un seul être humain ne comptent pas, mais où seule l'existence humaine importe. C'est pourquoi tous les chefs-d'oeuvre sont objectifs et impersonnels.<sup>12</sup>

Northrop Frye relie les "formules" ou les mythes des cultures primitives à la récurrence de ces schèmes dans les chefs-d'oeuvre de la littérature. Pour lui, le mythe est un instrument structural qui permet de classer diverses oeuvres de fiction:

L'histoire littéraire totale nous permet de percevoir qu'il est possible de considérer la littérature comme une complication de formules relativement restreintes et simples qui peuvent être étudiées par rapport aux cultures primitives. . . . La relation de la littérature subséquente à ces formules primitives n'est d'aucune façon une simple complication . . . de fait, il semble y avoir une tendance générale de la part des grands classiques à y revenir. . . . Le chef-d'oeuvre nous attire vers un point auquel il nous semble voir converger un nombre énorme de schèmes importants.<sup>13</sup>

## UTILISATION DU GENRE DRAMATIQUE PAR LA TÉLÉVISION

Une des façons les plus utiles d'examiner la littérature est de grouper diverses oeuvres de forme analogue. La *Poétique* d'Aristote était la première tentative disciplinée de définir les propriétés de l'expression littéraire. Aristote a identifié trois genres ou styles littéraires, la tragédie, l'épopée et le lyrisme, qui sont distingués conformément aux conditions

établies entre l'auteur et son public. Les mots peuvent être déclamés devant un spectateur, ils peuvent être récités devant un auditeur ou écrits pour un lecteur.

Même si la relation entre un poète qui récite et un auditoire qui écoute peut avoir été réelle pour Homère ou Chaucer, l'invention de l'imprimerie a rendu cette relation de plus en plus théorique et le poème oral a vite été remplacé par le roman en prose, le genre de l'imprimerie.

Dans le drame, les personnages hypothétiques ou internes de l'histoire font face à l'auditoire directement, dissimulant l'auteur aux yeux de son auditoire.<sup>14</sup>

Dans le domaine de la télévision, la présentation visuelle est aussi importante que l'expression verbale. Il est possible de traiter presque n'importe quel sujet de différentes façons, en le présentant par exemple sous la forme d'un simple rapport oral ou d'un rapport documentaire complexe. Le drame, qui contient des éléments visuels et oraux établit un fondement concret qui nous permet d'observer comment les instruments de la critique littéraire peuvent être appliqués à la télévision.

Ce ne sont pas seulement les émissions évidemment théâtrales comme les séries télévisées, les comédies de situation, les drames d'action ou les films faits-pour-la-télévision qui font ample usage du genre dramatique. Les émissions d'information et les nouvelles du sport empruntent aussi certaines de ses caractéristiques. L'analogie du drame et des sports est peut-être plus évidente, étant tous deux des spectacles conventionnels ayant pour objet de divertir le public. Le reporter et l'auteur dramatique partagent le désir d'ordonner le déroulement et la confusion de la réalité. Ils font un travail de distillation, qui omet les faits non essentiels en vue de faire ressortir de façon plus immédiate les aspects vraiment importants d'une situation.

Une étude détaillée des conventions dramatiques peut permettre aux personnes qui travaillent dans le domaine de la télévision de mieux comprendre certaines des formes qu'elle a empruntées à la tradition. Par exemple, les émissions policières diffusées aux heures de pointe rappellent souvent, du point de vue de la mise en scène et des personnages, les descriptions que Northrop Frye a faites de "l'imagerie démonique" de *l'Enfer* de Dante ou du "Wasteland" de Eliot, tandis que leurs intrigues font penser à un mélodrame de l'âge victorien.<sup>15</sup>

Les premières manifestations de l'expression dramatique de l'expérience humaine se trouvent dans les rituels du prêtre, du shaman et du poète,

chacun tentant à sa façon d'expliquer les forces qui meuvent l'environnement de l'homme:

Nous voyons dans le rituel une imitation de la nature possédant une forte dose de ce que nous nommons magie. La magie semble être un effort volontaire de recouvrer un rapport que nous avons perdu avec les cycles naturels. . . . Le rituel construit un calendrier et s'efforce d'imiter l'exactitude précise et sensible du mouvement des corps célestes et la réaction correspondante de la végétation. C'est l'expression d'une volonté de synchroniser les énergies de l'homme et de la nature (au moment de la récolte). . . . Mais l'aspect magique du rituel est clairement axé sur un univers dans lequel une nature stupide et indifférente ne peut plus restreindre la société humaine mais est restreinte par cette société.<sup>16</sup>

L'observance solennelle des rites religieux a vite fait de se joindre aux mythes ancestraux. Il s'ensuivit un amalgame complexe de valeurs morales, d'ordres sociaux et de croyances magiques qui furent présentés à la communauté au cours d'un spectacle dans lequel les préoccupations et les croyances de la communauté trouvèrent leur expression symbolique.<sup>17</sup>

Kenneth Burke a étudié le procédé créatif comme la découverte de l'artiste des symboles capables d'exprimer les émotions et comme leur agencement, de façon à ce qu'ils puissent communiquer des expériences. En utilisant les termes et les découvertes de la psychologie pour interpréter la littérature, il établit une liaison entre l'accent que placent les sciences sociales sur la dramatisation et la communication de l'expérience humaine au moyen des rites et la tentative du critique littéraire d'obtenir une connaissance de la nature commune ou universelle de l'homme qui se révèle dans les constructions de son imagination.

Burke a écrit que la littérature fournit à l'homme l'équipement nécessaire pour vivre au sein de la société. Le comportement humain, qui se situe dans le domaine de l'action, peut être facilement analysé en termes dramatiques. Les genres littéraires comme la tragédie, la comédie et la satire représentent l'homme communiquant avec ses pareils, aux prises avec l'anxiété, le doute, la confusion, l'amour, la haine, la peur, le désespoir et l'espérance:

Les hommes communiquent comme des acteurs qui jouent leurs rôles. . . . Leur communication, comme les conflits de la tragédie, comprend des actes de concurrence et de collaboration. La différence entre le drame symbolique et le drame social est semblable à la



différence entre les obstacles imaginaires et les obstacles réels, mais pour produire un effet sur l'auditoire, les drames symboliques doivent refléter les obstacles réels du drame social.<sup>18</sup>

Les forces sociales qui régissent la réalité—la concurrence, le conflit, l'accommodation et l'assimilation—sont dissociés par le dramaturge de façon à former une vision ou une image cohérente de l'expérience humaine. Un drame est la particularisation intentionnelle d'une situation typique. Il s'attache à un schème de l'expérience et lui donne une forme, et donc un sens.

Au cours des 2,500 ans et plus que compte l'histoire de l'expression dramatique, la participation de l'auditoire à l'action a subi un certain nombre de modifications importantes.<sup>19</sup> Au sens le plus littéral de spectacle divertissant, les combats de gladiateurs dans les arènes romaines, l'auditoire détenait le droit de vie et de mort sur les gens qui les divertissaient. Les pièces de la Grèce classique, jouées dans des amphithéâtres à ciel ouvert, étaient des mythes nationaux familiers que l'on présentait à la population entière. Même si l'auditoire était séparé de l'action par des acteurs masqués et un chœur, il participait tout de même au spectacle en exprimant à haute voix les émotions que l'histoire suscitait chez lui. La scène élisabéthaine encourageait les acteurs à s'adresser directement à l'auditoire au moyen d'apartés et de soliloques. L'action était racontée par des monologues et des dialogues et illustrée par des scènes jouées sur le plateau principal et l'arrière-scène. Les pièces de théâtre modernes sont écrites pour être jouées sur une scène à proscenium. À l'aide du décor et du costume, les événements représentés ont pour objet de créer une illusion de réalité. Le proscenium est considéré comme un quatrième mur qui serait absent. Néanmoins, l'action est complètement isolée de l'auditoire par le cadre de la scène, les rideaux et les lumières.

Vers les années 1910, la nouvelle industrie du cinéma commençait à faire directement concurrence au spectacle théâtral. La qualité principale du cinéma réside dans son immense écran sur lequel est projetée une suite d'images nettes et claires. Les moyens cinématographiques qui permettent de contrôler le mouvement, qu'il s'agisse de moyens techniques comme le découpage ou le montage, ou du mouvement de la caméra ou du sujet, modifient l'image constamment. L'écran scintillant retient l'attention du spectateur, lui donnant l'impression qu'il est submergé par l'action. Et les conditions dans lesquelles un film est projeté, la salle sombre, l'intense concentration des sensations visuelles et auditives, la distortion de la "réalité" causée par l'image fluctuante et les transitions,

contribuent à fournir une forte expérience visuelle.<sup>20</sup> Chaque membre de l'auditoire vit, comme en rêve, l'histoire qui est présentée.

Evidemment, la télévision est l'instrument dramatique le plus important de nos jours. Encore une fois, l'expérience est différente, même de celle qu'offre le cinéma. Le petit écran, l'image soigneusement centrée, les intrusions publicitaires et le milieu domestique dans lequel les émissions sont visionnées ne permettent pas d'exiger la concentration intense requise par des pensées ou des intrigues complexes. Par conséquent, la télévision présente presque toujours des versions simplifiées de la réalité, que ce soit par des intrigues domestiques ou des drames d'action dont le dénouement est prévisible ou par les informations qui résument chaque soir en vingt minutes les nouvelles du jour. Davantage même que le cinéma, la télévision est un procédé industriel, par rapport à la fois à la création et à la consommation de ses produits. Les coûts de production et de distribution sont si élevés que tous les efforts sont concentrés en vue de produire des émissions conformément à des formules dont le succès a été prouvé et dont les résultats immédiats, en ce qui a trait aux cotes d'écoute, sont garantis. Malgré ces transformations des moyens de diffusion, les notions fondamentales de la présentation dramatique sont demeurés les mêmes. Tout ce qui a vraiment changé, c'est la façon de s'adresser aux auditoires. Tout comme le style du reportage des nouvelles a évolué, passant de la lettre formelle et de la gazette officielle, au "canard" populaire et au quotidien à fort tirage, ainsi le genre, le thème et le mode du théâtre ont subi plusieurs transformations depuis le théâtre d'Eschyle et d'Euripide.

Même si les émissions de télévision diffusées aux heures de pointe en Amérique du Nord utilisent largement le genre dramatique, elles ont peu de choses en commun avec les genres traditionnels de la tragédie et de la comédie. Ces genres dramatiques, adaptés pour la télévision, ont été réduits à la "comédie de situation" et au "drame d'action". Les genres dont ces séries se rapprochent le plus sont la farce et le mélodrame, qui ont tous deux une longue histoire en tant que divertissement populaire.

Les arts populaires peuvent être définis comme ceux qui appartiennent à la culture populaire et qui considèrent les oeuvres d'art comme des produits à être consommés par la plus grande partie de la population. Afin d'être considérés comme des produits efficaces de divertissement public, et qui se prêtent aux pratiques de commercialisation de la consommation de masse, "l'objet d'artisanat" doit pouvoir facilement être adapté à un procédé industrialisé de fabrication. L'utilisation formulée de la violence a été exploitée sans fin par les arts populaires comme un moyen de faire participer un large auditoire.<sup>21</sup>

Un grand nombre de critiques ont discuté de la dérivation des genres artistiques actuels, tels que le roman policier, le western et l'émission à sensation dans laquelle la violence est utilisée pour résoudre les conflits, ce qui rappelle les prototypes des "beaux arts", où l'élément violent est une caractéristique légitime et intégrale de l'imagination.

Depuis le temps où les bardes attiques racontaient leurs aventures, ce genre de narration a formé la base et la force dynamique de la plupart des histoires célèbres de la littérature occidentale. Il suffit de considérer la gamme des histoires d'aventure, de l'*Odyssée* et *Don Quichotte* à *Robinson Crusoë*, *David Copperfield* et *Moby Dick* et peut-être finalement à cette autre odyssée, *Ulysses*. Mais avec ce roman célèbre de James Joyce, la littérature semblait retirer son intérêt de ce qu'elle avait jadis considéré comme l'aventure—les exploits largement physiques de personnages héroïques—en faveur d'histoires de sensibilité humaine et d'étude psychologique (certains diraient qu'il s'agit encore d'aventure) au sein de la conscience humaine. Le roman traditionnel d'aventure avait été, dans un certain sens, abandonné par les écrivains sérieux et relégué au même plan que le roman policier, les histoires pour enfants, les "romans à quatre sous" et le nouveau genre populaire exploité par l'industrie du cinéma où, dans les drames héroïques de l'Ouest américain, de gangsters, d'espions, et des deux guerres mondiales, il est demeuré la source principale de divertissement.<sup>22</sup>

Le sujet de ce colloque est la violence à la télévision, sujet qui aujourd'hui prend souvent la forme des conventions stéréotypées de l'intrigue du drame policier ou criminel. Ce genre dramatique se particularise par la distinction exagérée et hautement simplifiée qu'il établit entre le bon et le mauvais et qu'on trouve aussi dans le mélodrame. La convention du mélodrame exige que des personnages clairement vertueux ou vicieux soient mis en conflit dans des situations sensationnelles remplies de suspense. Il se distingue aussi par de violents appels aux émotions: les sentiments de pitié et de crainte que les événements tragiques suscitent dans l'auditoire sont exploités jusqu'au plus haut point d'intensité et traduits en pathos et en terreur.<sup>23</sup>

Une dissertation de R.E. Durnat intitulée "Ways of Melodrama" indique une certaine idée des qualités du genre mélodramatique. Il établit une distinction entre le "mélodrame émotif" dans lequel aucun personnage n'est vraiment développé et dans lequel les émotions qui, dans un mélodrame, établissent les liaisons entre les épisodes mélodramatiques, sont utilisées non pas pour stimuler l'action mais pour susciter une autre émotion, et le mélodrame "pur" (le film à sensation et le western ordinaire). Dans le mélodrame pur, le mélodrame de la poursuite, de la



menace et de la survie, les personnages doivent être assez simples et superficiels mais ils doivent, comme les situations, être réels à leur propre niveau. Ils doivent être pertinents et posséder un contexte d'une certaine importance.<sup>24</sup>

Deux thèmes sont importants dans un mélodrame: le triomphe de la vertu morale sur la vilenie et l'idéalisation subséquente des opinions morales que l'on attribue à l'auditoire.<sup>25</sup> Lorsqu'il discute de ce qu'il nomme "la fausse orientation du roman d'aventure", Arlen a noté cette approche moraliste du drame télévisé:

Ce qui est corrompu, ou du moins de travers, dans un grand nombre de drames télévisés, n'est pas qu'il y ait trop ou trop peu de violence, mais que la plus grande partie de l'action qui se produit sur l'écran soit imprécise, vague, transposée derrière un écran diaphane de tartuferie et de moralisme. Quel que soit le nombre de meurtres ou de fusillades qui aient lieu dans un drame policier ou dans un western, le leitmotiv de l'action semble être la position morale du détective ou du shériff et la position morale de l'émission [incarnée par] notre narrateur. Quant aux émissions plus simples, la moralité est infusée plutôt simplement: des personnages nobles, rationnels, bien intégrés à la société contre des criminels malfaisants et antisociaux bien que souvent romantiques. Dans les émissions les plus ambitieuses, comme "Kojak" et "Columbo" entre autres, un ton moral plus complexe imprègne le récit—il s'agit souvent d'une combinaison malheureuse de quasi-freudisme et des restes d'une tartuferie chrétienne. Les personnages agissent très peu sans être "compris", même s'il ne s'agit pas d'une compréhension très profonde mais plutôt d'une moralisation rhétorique. . . . Bref, le narrateur à la télévision semble nous parler dans un vide, jouant de notre besoin d'écouter des histoires et ne nous fournissant que des versions fausses et idéalisées de nous-mêmes et utilisant des idéaux qui sont pour la plus grande partie dépassés et discrédités.<sup>26</sup>

## UNE NOUVELLE ORIENTATION A LA CRITIQUE DE LA TELEVISION

Il y a un an, le Aspen Institute a commandité une conférence intitulée "La télévision en tant que force sociale—De nouvelles approches de la critique de la télévision". L'objet de l'Atelier sur la télévision qui a financé la conférence était d'encourager les gens à examiner l'effet de la télévision sur la société et à en étudier sérieusement les possibilités. Douglass Cater, directeur du programme de l'Institut sur les communications et la société, a fait une plaidoirie pressante, qui figure au texte de la conférence, en vue d'inciter tous les gens sérieux à appliquer leurs facultés critiques à ce médium qui rejoint plus de personnes que tous les

autres media ensemble. Aujourd'hui, alors que les communications changent si rapidement,

nous devons porter une attention plus critique à la télévision que nous ne l'avons fait par le passé. Trop de temps a été inutilement consacré à la critique de ce que la télévision offre de pire. Nous devons consacrer plus de temps à ce que la télévision offre de mieux, non seulement pour louer les émissions mais pour examiner systématiquement leur style, leurs techniques et leur message. La critique devrait aussi s'étendre et dépasser l'élite intellectuelle et pénétrer dans les écoles élémentaires et secondaires, où on pourrait encourager les enfants à penser au medium qui occupe une si grande partie de leurs loisirs. Nous devons tenter d'enseigner au téléspectateur comment distinguer la vérité de la sophistique.<sup>27</sup>

Richard Adler, coordonnateur du projet, a présenté une dissertation examinant diverses interprétations de l'effet de la télévision en tant que force sociale et culturelle. Au cours des vingt-cinq dernières années, la télévision est devenue la forme principale de divertissement et la source d'information la plus importante pour la plupart des gens. Elle a modifié nos notions de temps et d'espace, abolissant les distances et aidant à accélérer le cours de l'histoire:

Pourtant même aujourd'hui, personne ne prend la télévision au sérieux. Le téléviseur n'est devenu qu'un autre meuble de qui la plupart des gens attendent un divertissement facile. Le fait que les émissions soient anodines et banales, répétitives et constamment interrompues par des messages commerciaux est accepté comme inévitable. A part quelques groupes d'intérêt spécial, les organismes qui s'intéressent directement à la réglementation de la télévision et quelques chercheurs en télécommunications, la nature et le contenu de nos émissions de télévision sont demeurés à un assez bas niveau de priorité dans la conscience nationale. Paradoxalement, il se peut que la télévision ne soit pas prise au sérieux précisément parce qu'elle est si importante. Elle fait tellement partie intégrante de l'édifice social qu'il est extrêmement difficile de la considérer comme une institution autonome.<sup>28</sup>

Ce sont d'abord les hommes d'affaires et les technologues, que les possibilités de ce nouvel instrument de communications fascinaient, qui ont mis la télévision en valeur. Les personnes chargées de fournir le contenu des émissions, soit les directeurs des programmes, les artistes, les écrivains, les acteurs et les techniciens faisaient auparavant profession dans le domaine du journalisme et des beaux-arts. Ces gens ont eu

tendance à faire appel aux formes et aux matériaux traditionnels auxquels ils étaient habitués, en ne leur apportant que des modifications superficielles pour les adapter aux besoins du nouveau medium. Ce n'est que récemment que les radiodiffuseurs ont appris comment utiliser pleinement cette aptitude unique qu'a la télévision de "'sonder le pouls de l'actualité', c'est-à-dire de transmettre visuellement et oralement les événements d'actualité téléspectateur, où qu'il soit."<sup>29</sup>

La télévision est à la fois une entreprise extrêmement rentable et une industrie hautement complexe. Si nous voulions fournir au public une image exacte de la télévision, nous devrions non seulement le renseigner sur les contraintes de réglementation et de production qui définissent le medium, mais encore effectuer une étude détaillée des aspects financiers de la télévision, des développements dans le domaine de la technologie des communications et de certains aspects juridiques. Aucun critique n'est compétent dans la totalité ou même dans plusieurs de ces domaines.

Nous devons dépasser nos préoccupations quant aux procédés de production et de transmission. La question du contenu de la télévision n'est pas de déterminer ce qui convient aux masses, mais de comprendre le rôle critique que joue la télévision lorsqu'il s'agit de définir et d'exprimer notre culture. Nous devons approfondir ce qu'elle nous dit de nous-mêmes et de notre monde. Nous devons examiner tout ce que la télévision a apporté aux anciennes traditions du récit et du drame. Enfin, nous devons surtout élaborer des normes appropriées au medium et susceptibles de nous permettre de faire les genres de distinctions qui sont l'essence du procédé critique.<sup>30</sup>





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## The social effects of television violence

**Summary:** This section of the symposium explored the evidence discovered by the behavioral sciences relating to the possible effects of televised violence on society and patterns of individual behavior.

Dr. Robert Liebert discussed the experimental and research findings on the learning of anti-social behavior from television. Panelists with research backgrounds in psychology and sociology discussed "What is learned and what could be learned from TV?"

**Résumé:** La présente partie du colloque a été consacrée à l'examen de la conclusion tirée par les sciences du comportement, selon laquelle la violence dans les émissions de télévision a des effets possibles sur la société et les schèmes de comportement individuel.

M. Robert Liebert a discuté des effets des résultats de recherches et d'expériences sur l'acquisition d'un comportement antisocial à partir des émissions de télévision. Les participants au débat qui ont des connaissances fondamentales en psychologie et en sociologie ont discuté du sujet "Quels enseignements retire-t-on et peut-on retirer de la télévision?"

### The effects of television violence: Experimental and research findings

#### Robert M. Liebert

Dr. Robert M. Liebert, a professor of psychology and psychiatry at the State University of New York at Stonybrooke, has long been interested in how television and movies can influence children. His research interests are reflected in his many published articles and seven books. Dr. Liebert served as principal researcher for the U.S. Surgeon General's committee on television. His most recent book (with others) is *The early window—Effects of television on children and youth*.

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I think I can best serve our common goal by trying to explain, from my point of view, what has happened in the way of research, and to give you my personal opinions on where we might go. It's perhaps best and fairest if I begin with some disclaimers. My interest is almost exclusively with the effects of entertainment television on children. The remarks I offer you may or may not be applicable to adults. I shall try here to go beyond the simple issue of TV violence and its possible effects on youth, and draw you into wider discussion of how these potential influences might work, and offer you some suggestions on what we as a society might do about it.

We have heard a good deal about history. It has been noted that when the

first comic books, films, and radio programs came out, they were criticized as potentially bringing about increased aggression and anti-social behavior. But society didn't collapse, despite all the warnings about comic books and movies, and that raises the question—isn't it the same for television?

I think not. I reckon that the most avid of movie-going children in the 1930s didn't get one-tenth the dose of entertainment from the cinema that our children now get from television. Also, the film-makers certainly must attract an audience in some basic sense, drawing children and youth and adults to the box office, but are not required to capture their eyes and ears and wholehearted attention for the entirety of their programs. But that is the goal for the commercial producer and the commercial broadcaster of entertainment television. Money is at stake, and if the child's interest flags, the child will turn the knob and somebody will lose money. The introduction of television changes the way of life of societies more drastically than any other social innovation we have ever seen. People change their eating and sleeping habits, youth directs its attention away from written materials and toward television. Television is an unusual medium in terms of the amount of time devoted to it, and in terms of its special attractiveness.

There is another reason, I think, to be concerned about television, and particularly about the possible influence of television violence. In the U.S. in 1954, content analysis of the frequency of aggression on television—and here I refer to overt acts of physical violence: one character hits, stabs, shoots, or otherwise does overt physical harm to another—suggested that 17% of all of our prime-time programs were saturated with that kind of aggression. By 1960, about 60% were, and by 1969, more than 80% were. In our own studies of children's programs in the 1974/75 season, we found that 83% of all the programs were dense with violence: there was a violent act once every three minutes on children's Saturday morning cartoons. We must ask what effect television violence has and we must be very mindful of the methodological problems and the scientific errors confronted by our predecessors as they asked about the effects of movies, radio, and comic books.

The tests of television's effects have been tests that directly measure a child's willingness to aggress against other people overtly, and in physical ways, as a result of merely seeing entertainment television. Almost without exception, they show that for four-year-olds, eight-year-olds, and twelve-year-olds the immediate effect of viewing that kind of aggressive material is an increase in the child's willingness to physically hurt another individual. That evidence, however, is not by itself sufficient because



although children come into a laboratory to watch television and are tested or play games shortly after the televised experience, the results of the tests at most suggest connections and aren't hard evidence. For that reason, one of the major efforts in the Surgeon General's work was to engage in so-called correlational field studies. These investigators said, let's get two kinds of information about a very large number of boys and girls: one, how much television violence do they naturally watch at home? what is their normal selected diet of television violence? and two, how aggressive is that youngster in terms of his or her own attitudes or behavior in real life, as measured by the observations of teachers, peers, social scientists who are introduced into the ongoing school situation? Again, almost without exception these correlational studies gave the same kind of answer as the experiments which led to them. Regardless of whether the youngsters were male or female, white or black, lived in Texas or in New York, the more aggression and violence they watched in the course of their daily lives at home, the more aggressive they were in their own attitudes and behavior. But even that's not sufficient evidence, for it is always possible that there is some third factor that explains away the relationship. You can subtract the effect of these potential third factors, listing them one at a time. If we subtract the potential effect of those factors, is there anything left?

In major studies involving hundreds of normal children from all parts of the country, the result remained the same after the statistical adjustment procedure: the more television violence the child watched, the more aggressive he or she was in his attitudes and behavior. We are concerned with how our children will act as adults—not merely with how they act as children.

One of our investigations relates directly to that issue. The investigation was conducted by Munro Lefkowitz and his associates, and their principal result concerned boys: the single best predictor of how aggressive the child was at age nineteen was how much TV violence he had watched ten years before at age nine, and presumably during the course of his formative development. The evidence of basic laboratory experiments that have a history of twelve or fifteen years, the correlational field studies, the longitudinal data collected by Lefkowitz, the naturalistic experiments of the kind that Stoyer and her associates produced, seem to me in concert to produce an answer to our question as strong, as clear, as unambiguous, and as important as anything else that social scientists have ever done, evidence as firm as natural scientists can ever find. There is a link between watching entertainment television and violent and overt aggressive behavior by children in real life. What percentage of children are affected? It is in fact difficult to say. It is not a tiny, tiny minority,

otherwise the results wouldn't be as strong as they are. Furthermore, if television violence influences some children directly, any child could be the unwitting or indirect victim.

Just to point to television violence and say that it is related to overtly aggressive behavior is not very satisfying and ultimately will give us few guidelines for action. Instead, I think we have to think in some very broad, sweeping ways, perhaps ask questions as general as, what is our species like? what is man about? In many species most of what is transmitted from generation to generation is genetic information. Many animals behave as they do because it is wired into them. Man's most salient characteristic is that he is adaptive. We do not transmit social behavior genetically from one generation to another. Rather, we transmit information socially from one generation to another. We teach our children how to act. The most effective way to transmit social behavior to the next generation is by our own actions. We teach our children merely by acting in front of them. They learn observationally. They see what our explicit and implicit values are and by and large they adopt them. I think that's how television works.

The lesson we are teaching our children through television is that to be violent, to be aggressive, is bad if you are a bad guy, and okay if you are a good guy. I urge you to note this. Certain kinds of entertainment television have what I judge to be an adverse effect on children, making them more aggressive in their day-to-day actions. If this is right, then other kinds of entertainment television would teach very different kinds of lessons and have very different kinds of effects. Would producers and broadcasters develop programming that appeals to and entertains children, that captures their interest and is competitive, and at the same time, that not only does not teach lessons of violence and aggression, but teaches the lesson that sometimes interpersonal conflicts can be settled in a non-violent, non-aggressive cooperative way?

Purposely or inadvertently, whether we wish it or not, television is and must be a teacher, not because we've made it so, but because the natural process of observational learning takes place when children watch the behavior of others. Television is a teacher whose curriculum is largely unplanned, whose effects are largely unmonitored. I really don't know how realistic it is to suggest that we try to alter the kind of television our kids see now by developing more pro-social programs. But I am quite sure that most of the other alternatives are unsatisfactory, and letting television violence continue as it has seems to me the least satisfactory of all solutions. You might as well have a try at making television better, because at the least we run a very serious risk if we do not try.

## **Panel discussion:**

### **What is learned and what could be learned from television?**

**James J. Teevan**

**Gabrielle Clerk**

**Marvin Goldberg**

**James J. Teevan**

James J. Teevan Jr. has been an assistant professor at the University of Western Ontario since coming to Canada in 1971. A graduate of Harpur College and Indiana University, Dr. Teevan taught sociology at both Indiana and the University of Maryland. He is the author of numerous publications, papers, and reviews concerned with the deterrent effects of punishment. His current research is concerned with the prestige of sociology journals, television violence and attitudes, and subjective deterrence.

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No one can demonstrate to everyone's satisfaction the connection or lack of it between television violence and aggressive behavior. Still, there are pressures for deciding the issue, and social science is attempting to provide some of the needed information.

Because they are better at demonstrating cause and effect and for controlling the effects of third or confounding variables, laboratory studies are often preferred over survey research. It is in such studies that we have found the strongest links between television violence and aggressive behavior. However, laboratory studies are criticized for their artificiality, their emphasis on short-term effects, the weakness of their variables. In few studies are the subjects allowed to inflict violence on real people in an unrestricted environment. In real life, children are not placed alone in a room with a toy exactly like the one they saw abused moments before. Because of these methodological shortcomings, the findings of laboratory studies can be disputed.

Survey research, on the other hand, is more "real life", more long-term, but cause and effect are lost and confounding third variables weaken relationships. Correlations are calculated, but the research does not show whether TV violence causes aggression, or aggressive people choose violent TV, or if a lack of a father figure, for example, causes both a choice of violent TV and aggression.

Taken together, the methodological strengths of survey research should cancel out the weaknesses of laboratory studies and vice versa. Since both types of research show a small positive relationship between TV



violence and aggressive behavior, the U.S. Surgeon General's committee cautiously accepted that interpretation: "Thus, the two laboratory and survey research sets of findings converge in three respects: a preliminary and tentative indication of a causal relation between viewing violence on television and aggressive behavior; an indication that any such causal relation operates only on some children (who are predisposed to be aggressive); and an indication that it operates only in some environmental contexts."

It is interesting to compare that statement with a 1961 statement by Schramm, Lyle, and Parker: "For some children, under some conditions, some television is harmful. For other children under the same conditions, or for the same children under other conditions, it may be beneficial. For most children, under most conditions, most television is probably neither harmful nor particularly beneficial."

After \$1 million of studies, have we made much progress? Perhaps we should move the areas of concern away from the effects on behavior to the effects of television violence on attitudes. These effects may be just as dangerous and even more pervasive than violent behavior. Specifically, we should look more closely at the effects of television violence on the approval of violence in others—the acceptance of police brutality, corporal punishment in schools, invasion of foreign countries, capital punishment—or the feeling that violence is pervasive and thus one needs to protect oneself and be wary of others.

Maybe we have too much data already; perhaps action is now called for. If we suspect that a chemical may be carcinogenic but are not sure, we will attempt to protect society from its potential effects through warnings, as for cigarettes, or in bans, as on cyclamates. Should not television violence be treated similarly?

Maybe we should move away from the question of proof, itself unanswerable, to the question of values. Should television be censored? This is a political question, one that social science usually refuses to answer, perhaps because it cannot. Perhaps television violence should be placed with other issues such as marijuana. The Le Dain Commission says marijuana is not that harmful, yet we somehow have not legalized it. Then there is capital punishment. The data show that the murder rate has increased since 1968 when we outlawed capital punishment, but again, the question is a political one. (It would be interesting to see whether the people who advocate the censorship of television would also be against the reimposition of capital punishment. I have a feeling they are.) Social science has provided all that it possibly can on the effects of televised

violence. We can refine some of our techniques, we can add more data. We can spend a lot more money, ask more questions, but eventually it has to become a political question.

I did one of the papers for the U.S. Surgeon General's Report. As one reads the final research, significant relationships between exposure to TV violence and aggression are reported. This significance, however, refers to statistical significance, not to be confused with either theoretical or practical significance. My study showed correlations of .15, statistically significant (meaning we could generalize to the non-sampled population) but these figures mean that TV violence can explain only 2.25% of the variance in aggressive behavior, and other factors explain or account for 97.75% of variance! Even the Lefkowitz et al. correlation of .31 explains less than 10% of variance in aggressive behavior.

Moreover, the studies cannot rule out third variables as causing both choice of violent television and aggressive behavior. For example, in the Lefkowitz et al. study with its time-lagged correlation, they argue that television watching in Grade 3 "causes" aggression in Grade 13. Is it not possible that being from a broken home causes boys to be aggressive and to watch violent TV in Grade 3, and that other boys protected by their parents do not engage in such behavior? By Grade 13, however, all boys watch violent TV, parents are irrelevant, but only the boys from broken homes are aggressive. Hence the relationship between TV violence and behavior would disappear in Grade 13.

Is TV thus a scapegoat? It is easier to control and regulate than other variables like poverty, discrimination, broken homes, police labelling, schools which encourage competition. Attempts to decrease violence receive great publicity and it appears that governments are hard at work to reduce violence. It would almost be worthwhile to allow total censorship of television for five years to demonstrate that violent behavior would continue at probably ever-increasing levels. To sum up, we must guard against facile solutions to complex problems.

### **Gabrielle Clerk**

Gabrielle Clerk est docteur en psychologie clinique et professeur au département de psychologie, à l'université de Montréal. Elle travaille en clinique avec des enfants et des adultes, où elle fait des recherches sur les différents comportements d'agressivité.

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Ma communication s'appuie sur des prémisses personnelles que je crois

bon de définir. Premièrement, l'agressivité en soi n'est pas nécessairement immorale ou destructive. Pouvant être plus ou moins adaptive, on doit la distinguer de la violence, de la brutalité et de l'hostilité. Deuxièmement, j'accepte les conclusions du rapport des Services de Santé des Etats-Unis intitulé "L'impact de la violence à la télévision" qui sont très claires; ce rapport conclut qu'il existe une faible relation causale entre le visionnement de la violence à la télévision et le comportement agressif, mais cette relation causale n'existe que chez certains enfants et adolescents ayant déjà une prédisposition à la violence, et ce, uniquement dans certains contextes.

En troisième lieu, je dirais que la télévision, à mon avis, a beaucoup plus d'impact sur la vie intellectuelle, les techniques d'enseignement et la créativité qu'elle en a sur le comportement violent des individus. Enfin, j'aimerais aborder cette dimension du problème, à savoir que ce n'est pas par le contrôle ou la censure qu'on résoudra le problème de la violence à la télévision.

Si, d'une part, les recherches sur la nature, sur les causes et les effets des différentes formes d'agressivité sont d'un grand intérêt pour les théoriciens, il semble, d'autre part, que le contrôle de l'agressivité est un problème beaucoup plus urgent sur le plan pragmatique que ne le sont les recherches des théoriciens. Mettant de côté le contrôle de l'agressivité à l'aide d'agents agissant sur la physiologie de l'individu, certaines données tirées des recherches ethnologiques peuvent toutefois servir de guide quant à la dimension psycho-sociale du contrôle de l'agressivité. Des expériences cliniques démontrent que, chez la majorité des espèces animales, l'agressivité suscitée par des situations de conflit, liées au territoire ou au partenaire sexuel, ne conduit jamais à la mort de l'ennemi. Chez toutes les espèces, le contrôle de l'agressivité se fait à l'aide d'activités, de gestes rituels qui ont une valeur communicative très complexe. Ces rituels présentent une ambivalence très profonde car les motivations sous-jacentes peuvent être reliées soit à la peur soit à l'agressivité. Mais ils jouent quand même un rôle très efficace, celui d'éviter la mort de l'ennemi qui est toujours conspécifique (c'est-à-dire appartenant à la même espèce, la relation prédateur et proie étant une relation très différente), tout en permettant au plus fort d'assurer sa survie et celle de l'espèce.

Il semblerait, cependant, que chez l'homme les choses se passent différemment. Il est le seul qui, parmi l'espèce animale, ira jusqu'à donner la mort à un membre de son espèce et pourra même aller jusqu'à détruire des groupes entiers. Evidemment, chez les humains, les impératifs suscitant conflits et agressivité sont aussi reliés au territoire découlant



des facteurs économiques; mais ces impératifs sont souvent masqués par des valeurs beaucoup plus abstraites, comme la langue, la religion, les modes de vie, ce qui rend le phénomène d'agressivité chez les humains, malgré certains parallèles, très différent de celui que l'on rencontre chez l'animal. Mais les humains ont aussi leurs rituels, tant sur le plan individuel que collectif, et ce dans le but de minimiser ou de contrôler l'agressivité: par exemple, les salutations, les échanges de notes diplomatiques, les conférences de paix, les rencontres sportives. Ces rituels ou conventions, à cause de la multiplicité des conflits et de la disparité économique toujours plus grande entre les collectivités et les individus, sont jugés avec beaucoup de scepticisme par plusieurs quant à leur efficacité, lorsqu'ils ne sont pas ouvertement rejetés comme hypocrites. Ces conventions sont, jusqu'à un certain point, dépassées par l'ampleur des conflits et les tensions aiguës qui caractérisent notre vie. Mais elles continuent d'exister, elles sont entretenues et améliorées car elles sont, par ailleurs, essentielles à notre survie. Certains indices qui nous proviennent des données de la sociologie et de la psychologie des systèmes de communication laissent entrevoir la possibilité d'améliorer nos rituels de contrôle par une utilisation plus grande de la communication verbale par opposition à la communication non verbale. En effet, la violence éclate entre les individus, lorsque, par exemple, aucune autre solution de conflit ne peut être envisagée. Des solutions alternatives ne peuvent tenir que d'échanges verbaux entre les protagonistes. Chaque fois que l'action physique, et non la parole, tient lieu de communication, vous jetez la semence d'une violence future. Ainsi, dans les milieux défavorisés, la punition physique, les échanges de coups sont proportionnels à la pauvreté de la communication verbale; plus cette dernière est utilisée, moins il y a recours aux attaques. Génétiquement, l'action précède la parole mais l'issue d'un développement psycho-social sain est la prédominance du verbe sur l'action. En somme, la parole doit contrôler et retarder l'action. Malheureusement, la majorité des individus ne parviennent pas à ce stade et c'est là qu'est vraiment le défi pour la télévision, le medium par excellence de l'image et de l'action. Comment ne pas perdre ces caractéristiques tout en faisant une large part aux différents moyens de contrôle, y compris le verbal, dans le contenu de la programmation où l'agressivité est un élément-clé?

Comme je l'ai déjà souligné, la censure n'est pas la réponse. Elle satisfait la conscience de certains d'entre nous, nourrit les préjugés de certains autres, apaise les clameurs des groupes plus revendicateurs, mais la censure ne permet pas à la télévision d'avoir un effet positif, éducateur, dans le sens non moralisateur du mot, sur la communauté. Ce rôle éducateur, elle ne peut y échapper si on se rappelle que, durant les années 1960 (les statistiques pour notre décade seraient sûrement les

mêmes, sinon plus significatives), une enquête faite aux Etats-Unis et au Canada a permis de constater que l'enfant de six à neuf ans passait quotidiennement deux heures et demie devant l'écran; l'enfant de neuf à quatorze ans, trois heures, tandis qu'à partir de dix ans, 70% des émissions vues par les enfants étaient en fait des émissions destinées aux adultes.

En effet, la télévision dans bien des familles est devenue un parent ou une gardienne substitut, parce qu'un nombre de plus en plus grand d'enfants sont seuls entre le retour de la classe et la venue des parents pour le repas du soir. L'enfant absorbe quantité de messages sans jamais avoir l'occasion de demander des explications ou d'en discuter avec les adultes. Les parents, et ils sont de plus en plus nombreux, ne sont que très heureux de déléguer aux media de communication le soin de divertir leurs enfants, de les informer et même de les former. Comme on peut le constater, il s'agit beaucoup plus de l'élimination des scènes ou des messages offensants à la télévision mais il lui faut un renouveau de sa politique et de sa philosophie afin de jouer un rôle plus formateur et pour lui permettre d'exploiter tout son potentiel.

Voici, à mon avis, certaines possibilités susceptibles d'amener ce renouveau. En premier lieu, il faudrait abandonner cette distinction entre programmation pour enfants et programmation pour adultes. Cette distinction est basée sur un mythe et ne coïncide aucunement avec les faits; les émissions dites pour adultes sont regardées par la majorité des enfants dès qu'ils peuvent eux-mêmes manipuler l'appareil de télévision et qu'ils commencent à fréquenter des groupes autres que la famille; ce n'est vraiment que chez les enfants d'âge pré-scolaire que les parents contrôlent le visionnement de la télévision. C'est aussi un mythe de croire que l'adulte moyen peut absorber avec un esprit critique n'importe quel contenu d'émission. Il existe, chez toute personne, un côté irrationnel et émotif, et la télévision, consciemment ou non, y fait largement appel comme le démontrent les cotes d'écoute élevées de certaines émissions où la violence est loin d'être absente. En effet, l'image de la télévision appelle une participation directe, en profondeur, viscérale et ceci sans délai, délai qui est toutefois essentiel pour qui veut réfléchir. C'est là l'attrait de la télévision. Elle se fait l'alliée et même nourrit cette tendance qui sommeille en chacun de nous, d'agir plutôt que de réfléchir. Il faudrait aussi se rendre compte de l'effet néfaste qu'ont les cotes d'écoute sur la programmation d'un réseau de télévision, où, en général, la programmation axée sur l'action demeure un atout sûr.

Une autre dichotomie qui devrait être atténuée est celle qui existe entre les émissions de divertissement et les émissions dites d'éducation. Le

mot lui-même, lorsqu'il est accolé à un certain genre de programmation, éloigne le téléspectateur, alors que les éléments essentiels de ces émissions pourraient s'intégrer dans un autre genre de programmation et, de ce fait, atteindre le public qui a besoin de ces éléments. Ainsi, une émission sur la prévention du crime en milieu urbain intéresserait les experts et un petit groupe désireux d'apprendre, alors que les éléments importants pourraient fort bien être tissés à même la trame d'un roman. Le comité de sélection de la programmation d'un réseau est aussi très important; versés dans la subtilité de la technique des media et dans les implications financières et politiques de leur travail, les membres qui forment ce comité sont peut-être devenus si sophistiqués qu'ils peuvent difficilement concevoir les réactions respectives d'un adulte et d'un enfant moyens. Ce qui leur apparaît évident ou sans conséquence ne l'est pas nécessairement pour le téléspectateur moyen. Il faudrait aux membres de ce comité, une sensibilité presque de clinicien pour "empathiser" avec les répercussions possibles de leur choix et une conscience aiguë du fait que leurs préjugés, leurs expériences personnelles, leur idéologie politique motivent leur choix autant que des critères rationnels.

Enfin, en ce qui a trait à la violence, il est important de distinguer la violence théâtrale ou dramatique, apparaissant dans des contextes que l'on pourrait qualifier d'historiques, d'une part, de celle qui apparaît dans un contexte contemporain, d'autre part. Des recherches ont démontré que l'impact de la violence dans une émission dont le contexte n'est pas contemporain est très mince; peu de crimes s'inspirent d'une pièce qu'elle soit de Shakespeare ou de Dumas, mais le même contenu dramatique mis dans un contexte contemporain aura un impact tout à fait différent. Du au fait qu'elles sont centrées sur des caractères contemporains—le policier, le trafiquant de drogues, le révolutionnaire, le fraudeur, l'homme d'affaire malhonnête—de nombreuses émissions de télévision apparaissent aux yeux de la majorité des téléspectateurs comme une histoire vraie et non comme une création dramatique, et ce, parce qu'ils manquent d'esprit critique. Ce genre d'émissions devient un réservoir de modèles mais aussi une source pour alimenter la vie de fantaisie d'un grand nombre de téléspectateurs. Beaucoup plus grave est le fait que ces émissions ne présentent qu'un aspect ou qu'une phase dans la vie des personnages en jeu et évitent toutes les répercussions sociales des gestes qui sont posés. Les thèmes de ces émissions ne permettent que très rarement aux personnages d'explorer la situation de conflits dans laquelle ils se trouvent afin de trouver une solution autre que celle de la violence. Tout en se piquant de coller à la réalité, les situations dans lesquelles se retrouvent un policier, un trafiquant de drogues, un fraudeur sont très stéréotypées, et on ne voit presque jamais l'individu humain



avec ses possibilités d'évolution pour le pire ou le meilleur, avec ses capacités de réagir différemment aux circonstances de la vie.

Quant à la violence réelle, celle que côtoient quotidiennement des collectivités et des individus de certaines parties du globe, elle peut être, par le truchement d'émissions de nouvelles et de documentaires, l'occasion pour la masse de modifier profondément ses attitudes vis-à-vis de l'agressivité. Il faudrait que, en un seul instant, à cause de l'importance de la réaction viscérale à l'image, et ceci à l'intérieur d'une même émission et non à des moments différents, l'écran projette non seulement le geste agressif mais aussi les conséquences du geste, non seulement le visage de l'agresseur mais aussi celui de la victime. De nombreux observateurs de même que plusieurs recherches démontrent que le contrôle du geste agressif est amené chez l'agresseur par la perception d'indices de souffrance, de crainte, d'épouvante, de soumission chez la victime. Ces indices sont rarement soulignés par la télévision et leur absence contribue énormément à faire du geste de violence un geste de robot, alors que ce geste, tant chez l'agressé que chez l'agresseur, comporte une charge émotive très forte. L'écran devrait faire autant de place aux images de protagonistes qui essaient de trouver une solution à un conflit qu'à celles de protagonistes dans une situation de confrontation physique. La télévision devrait innover et tâcher de parler avec son grand public, lors de la diffusion de ces émissions, afin que les échanges verbaux viennent compléter, atténuer dans certains cas, l'information visuelle. Ceci demanderait une collaboration étroite entre techniciens, administrateurs, journalistes, réalisateurs, mais une collaboration plus étroite que celle qui existe déjà, en ayant la conviction que la télévision peut être non seulement un reflet partiel de la réalité, mais aussi un agent de changement.

### **Marvin Goldberg**

Marvin Goldberg completed his doctorate in marketing at the University of Illinois. An associate professor at McGill University's Faculty of Management Sciences, Dr. Goldberg is currently conducting research into the effects of pro-social programming on children. Dr. Goldberg is particularly interested in consumer psychology and his work has appeared in several publications, including the *Journal of Consumer Research*. The following was prepared by Mr. Goldberg with Gerald Gorn, Faculty of Management Sciences, McGill University.

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It was pointed out earlier that despite the influence of various mass media, our society hasn't collapsed in total ruin. However, insofar as my remarks lead to the notion of pro-social television, there's clearly a huge gap between what society might be and what it is. The array of

psychological and psychiatric problems that face our society certainly cannot be linked directly to what TV is or is not. But the alternative hypothesis has never been tested. What would our society be if positive values had been more emphasized in the past? Violence, as good as it might be, and some have argued that it might be good, simply dominates so much of the time. It's not a question to me of what TV means or how good or bad it is. There are just too many other values that we would like to give to our children, but do not—cooperation, sympathy, sharing, affection, friendship, understanding, persistence and competence in tasks, learning to accept rules, control of aggression, coping with frustration, fear reduction, self-esteem, valuing the unique qualities of each individual—where are these shown?

Children are so malleable, so easily influenced. We have it in our power to do good or evil to them. But it takes a great deal of effort to change an adult's attitudes, based as they are on a whole belief structure. It was pointed out this morning that Archie Bunker and "All in the Family" may not be performing the function it set out to do. Everyone enjoys the program but those viewers who are less tolerant remain less tolerant. They see poor Archie as the fall guy—everyone's picking on him. It's awfully hard to change adults, but by God, with children we can do a terrific job. We could, but I don't think we do.

A series of studies has indicated that by the ages of three to five, children have already picked up notions of society's preferences. For a long time, both white and black children in the United States indicated a preference for white dolls. Somehow they had picked up the notion that their parents, or the society around their parents, opted for the white kid. It was a nicer color, it was more fun to play with. A couple of recent studies have indicated that now whites pick whites, and maybe blacks pick blacks, but essentially, by three to five years of age, children somehow have already absorbed some of their parents' attitudes. Fortunately, at that age it's not a very well formulated preference, in the sense that the belief structure is not strong and can easily be changed.

Professor Gorn and I conducted a study in which we demonstrate that white children, given a choice of playing with a set of non-whites or whites, readily opt for the white children. The children we tested were white English Canadians. We introduced them to two sets of kids, one exclusively white, the other containing some non-whites, and asked them which group they would like to play with. Seventy percent of them picked the white kids. This is at age three to five. We then took the two-minute inserts that CBC has been producing to include in its fifteen-minute portion of "Sesame Street" and showed them to some of these children. These

inserts were very low key: Japanese Canadians playing with white Canadians on a see-saw in a park; more ethnically identifiable inserts of Japanese dancing or Canadian Indian children playing with tomahawks. Those children who were exposed to the inserts showed a far greater interest in the non-white children, in fact, the results of the experiments were virtually reversed. Having seen these brief inserts, almost 70% of them wanted to play with those non-white children. Now, I don't have any illusion that the effect we managed to obtain immediately following the viewing of the programs would last very long without some support measures. However, it is a positive start. What we're going to look for is support material.

The evidence, as it exists with regard to pro-social television, suggests strongly that there is a clear beneficial relationship between the support activities children engage in and the programs they watch on TV. If the child manages to get into a situation in which he discusses in class what pro-social actions he has seen on television—sharing, etc.—he is much more likely to exhibit similar behavior. I think what we need to do is develop some such education program along with positive TV programming. So I am sure in the long term we would see worthwhile results.

WGBH-TV in Boston has been awarded a \$2 million contract to develop 26 half-hours very much in the same vein as the CBC's two-minute "Sesame Street" inserts. They focus on Americans of various races and ethnic backgrounds, from Chicano to Hawaiian to Alaskan to Puerto Rican to white ethnic. The aim here, in semi-documentary form, is to familiarize nine-to-twelve-year-olds with children of other races. To learn something about other groups is the first step, and indeed an intrinsic part of changing one's attitude toward them.

## **Discussion from the floor**

In the third discussion period, Rick Salutin, a writer and dramatist, questioned whether the content and areas of study selected by the symposium organizers were really worth discussion in Canada: "We've had a historical introduction which consisted of a film on the Pastore hearings in Washington, a history of the study of mass media in the U.S., a literary discussion this morning that used parallels from Greece and Elizabethan England, and reports from social scientists either American or American-trained. Is it irrelevant that none of the English Canadian speakers have mentioned anything about Canada?"

Salutin objected to the social scientists' tendency to view all children as essentially the same regardless of where they are. He suggested that



Canadian children are quite different from American children, just as violence in Canada is significantly different from American violence: "Strife here has not been between blacks and whites. It has been English versus French, geographically separated and institutionally mediated. Furthermore, there haven't been head-on urban confrontations or disputes over an unpopular war." He concluded that it was important to recognize that American television violence is quite different in social relevance and impact.

James Teevan agreed with Mr. Salutin's remarks, suggesting that examinations of the effects of televised violence should not be conducted in a social vacuum: "If in fact television does have an effect, why is it that there is so much less violence in Canada than there is in the U.S.? If we are watching the same television, how does it get translated into violent behavior in one country and not in the other? Obviously the social context is important."

The two other panelists, however, were quick to disagree. Dr. Goldberg felt child development, particularly child reaction to television fare, is constant on both sides of the border: "We've done studies looking at the effects of advertising on children. You might want to argue that Canada is a less commercial society than the United States. However, the results of our studies on Canadian kids were exactly the same as those found in a couple of American studies. Children are just not that different."

Gabrielle Clerk agreed with Dr. Goldberg, stating that in the basic issues of violence the question of borders is quite unimportant: "I think we deceive ourselves by thinking that we have a specific kind of violence here in Canada which is different from that in the United States. One of the things I learned as a clinical psychologist dealing with people in both languages in Canada, is that when an English person hates and when a French-Canadian hates, both situations are frightening and you very easily forget what the language is at that moment."

David Helwig felt that the preoccupation with American studies which Mr. Salutin had noticed simply reflected the dominance of American programming on Canadian television. Helwig pointed out that the CBC drama department produces approximately 70 to 80 hours of programming a year. He doubted CTV or Global matched that amount. On the other hand, each of the three American networks produce several hundred hours of programming a year. With this in mind, Helwig suggested that the symposium might be doing little more than summoning up great resources of self-righteousness and turning them against a brick wall: "I may have found Dr. Liebert's talk immensely worrying and convincing but

we can do nothing, as far as I know, about CBS, NBC, or ABC unless the CRTC is willing to close the 49th parallel.”

National Film Board producer Guy Côté suggested speakers at the symposium had been too quick to concentrate on the anti-social, morally deteriorating aspects of violence. He recalled that one of the most violent stories he had ever encountered as a child was not found in crime comics, but in church on Good Friday. Each year the story of the Crucifixion was recounted with graphic detail, and throughout the year plaster reproductions of the crucified Christ were constantly on view. But on reflection, he realized that his attention had constantly been drawn to the victim of the violence and not to those who had inflicted it. Thus exposure to the story became a civilizing rather than a brutalizing experience. Côté wondered if some of the elements of violence televised today might not have the same socially positive effects that that tale of injustice committed 2000 years ago has had.

Sidney Newman questioned the preoccupation with pre-school children without enough thought being given to the effects of television on adolescents. He suggested children begin making increasingly complex judgments at the age of ten or eleven: “That’s when, in my view, Canadian kids begin to realize they are Canadian. It’s at that point that they begin to learn about their society and to change accordingly.” Dr. Liebert disagreed, stating that most evidence shows “the major formation of much of what a child thinks does occur before the age of twelve.”

Michele Landsberg, an associate editor of *Chatelaine* magazine, concluded the discussion with the suggestion that those persons worried about the particular effects of TV violence on Canadian children may be deluding themselves: “We used to have Canadian children, I’m not sure we do now. When I wrote an article critical of children’s programming, we were deluged with hundreds of letters from Canadian children defending the American way of life, saying that ‘The Brady Bunch’ was a wonderful example of how we Americans ought to live. We didn’t get any letters from children mentioning that they were not Americans. Most of them thought they were, and I think research in schools will bear this out. That’s one of the serious effects of American-produced TV programming, aside from violence, that we haven’t discussed here.”

## **CRTC background paper: Some themes in research on the effects of televised violence**

### **INTRODUCTION**

It has been the opinion, in North America, that the popular arts have a

corrupting effect on those exposed to them. Paralleling the growth of the mass media, public attention, in turn, has been focussed on the potentially negative influence of the newspaper, cinema, comic book, radio, and television. For a variety of reasons, mainly because of its nature and characteristics, television now is the object of public concern.

Unlike written communications or the older media of radio and silent films, television appeals to two senses simultaneously with an integrated message. Both these senses—vision and audition—are the most highly developed senses in man and those on which he relies most heavily for gaining information from his environment. In addition, television embodies motion and the human visual system is especially tuned to and held by the perception of motion.

Television is part of the development toward the intrinsic credibility of communication techniques. In part, this credibility is related to the vividness of the medium, defined in terms of the senses to which it appeals. Media which appeal to several senses are considered more vivid than those reaching only one. Television and movies are thus in a class by themselves as effective media. In addition, television demonstrates a high degree of fidelity in terms of the correspondence between an event and its reproduction. The combination of vividness and fidelity in televised presentations lends the medium an intrinsic authenticity, and provides television with an implicit internal validation of its content.

Another feature of television is its pervasiveness as a mass medium. Statistics show that television ownership and accessibility has practically reached the saturation point in North America. Unlike the movies, television does not require admission fees, a darkened room, and expensive equipment. Further, in contrast to printed communications, television demands of an audience little sophistication and no reading ability. As such, its appeal to children is particularly striking; their access is limited only by their ability to switch on the set and process the audio-visual information.

All these factors have made television an object of public concern. Violent programming and its possible effects on the attitudes, perception, and behavior of its audience has aroused the interest of concerned citizens for two decades. Public concern with media violence has produced research programs and support for scientific studies of various kinds.

In the past twenty-five years, literally thousands of research studies on the effects of television and film have been published. These studies establish



a connection between viewing violence and various forms of anti-social behavior. However, an extensive review of the literature reveals a number of objections to the methodology of the studies and their findings, for example:

- The studies derive from a faulty scientific world-view that human behavior can be studied with the methodologies of the physical sciences.
- Those studies conducted under laboratory conditions are not applicable to real-life situations.
- Field studies, conducted outside the laboratory, cannot take into account the full impact of the many other factors.
- The cause-and-effect relationships are not always clear and unambiguous.
- The methodological diversity of specific studies diminishes their comparability.
- Most studies deal only with short-term effects; there is a lack of long-term research.

Perhaps the most concise and lucid critical discussion is provided by the respected British sociologist, J.D. Halloran,<sup>1,2</sup> Secretary to the Television Research Committee and professor of communications at the University of Leicester. He isolates six broad themes which appear in the literature: catharsis, arousal, desensitization, imitation, the learning of violence as a value, and perceptions of a violent environment. The remainder of this bibliographical essay is organized around these themes. Lists of more general works, and of works in the related but less-developed area of research into pro-social effects of film and television, are to be found at the end.

## CATHARSIS

The concept of catharsis is an ancient one, first appearing in Aristotle's works on aesthetics and developed primarily in the *Poetics*. In the Greek philosophical tradition, it was undesirable that the emotions should be stirred; from the poet's point of view, it was inevitable. Aristotle's genius found the way out of this dilemma by positing his famous doctrine of catharsis: "Tragedy is an imitation of a worthy action complete in itself . . . which by means of pity and fear achieves the catharsis of emotions of that kind." The emotions when aroused are at the same time purged, leaving the spectator in a more serene condition of mind and a heightened state of self-mastery.

Some authors note that Aristotle's use of the word *catharsis* applied only to the tragic feelings of grief and fear which could be discharged through active expression by the audience. Today, however, theorists argue that

much the same kind of purging—this time of aggressive impulses—takes place through vicarious participation in observed aggression. The strongest contemporary proponent of this view must certainly be Seymour Feshback, professor of psychology at the University of California. His research, primarily using field study techniques, revealed that the observation of aggressive content on television reduced or regulated the expression of aggression by the viewer.<sup>3</sup> Feshback speculated that the dramatic presentations of televised violence provided his subjects with an opportunity to work through their hostile urges in socially acceptable fantasies.<sup>4</sup> This proposition has received some support from psychoanalytic writings which recognize that the cognitive activity of fantasy, whether dream or reverie, may enable children and adults to delay and control the immediate expression of impulses. If this be the case, then catharsis as a result of exposure to aggressive content could be evaluated as emotionally beneficial and socially constructive. But the idea of cathartic effects has not gone uncontested. The conclusions reached by Feshback are at odds with the preponderance of experimental<sup>5</sup> and correlational<sup>6,7</sup> research. A substantial number of studies have, in fact, shown that under a variety of conditions, the observation of violence increases rather than decreases subsequent aggressiveness.

## AROUSAL

Perhaps one of the most interesting and complex models linking communications media to aggressive behavior involves the concept of arousal. Various configurations of the model have evolved from the investigations by social psychologists into the relationship between a person's physiological state and his cognitive state, and between his cognitive state and his subsequent behavior.

A variety of circumstances may serve to create physiological arousal, and because the arousal being discussed is considered general in effect, measures such as heart-beat, blood pressure, galvanic skin response, and respiratory rate have been used to index the change. One of the first experiments in this area directly manipulated a subject's physiological condition by introducing adrenalin into the bloodstream.<sup>8</sup> Other research has given some evidence that such diverse stimuli as extreme temperature, physical exercise, and loud noise may all activate a general systemic arousal.<sup>9,10</sup> In addition, some authors have proposed that the overt content of a message or presentation may be sufficient in itself to cause arousal.<sup>11</sup> What is particularly interesting, however, is the discovery that the internal arousal experienced by the subject is often labelled according to the social conditions surrounding the participant. For example, when the subject is placed in contact with aggressively behaving

associates, he tends to label his internal aroused state as anger or aggression.<sup>12</sup>

These initial formulations provide some clue to the connection between emotional arousal and aggressive behavior. Perhaps the simplest theory advocates the idea that aggressive or violent content evokes in the receiver a general emotional arousal. The content itself determines the social situation so that the subject labels his emotional arousal as aggression. In such a situation, his drive for cognitive consistency *may* lead the subject to behave in an aggressive manner consistent with the internally labelled state.<sup>13</sup>

Alternatively, Berkowitz<sup>14</sup> has proposed that prior arousal may cause a person to be more receptive to aggressive cues or "micro-behaviors" contained in the communication material. These cues then provide a sort of immediate predisposition to aggressive behavior. In this conceptualization, the arousal state is a facilitator of the process linking violent materials to aggressive action, rather than a direct antecedent condition. Tannenbaum<sup>15</sup> fundamentally agrees with the model proposed by Berkowitz but emphasizes the level of arousal elicited by the aggressive stimuli rather than the mere presence of aggressive cues. A recent study by Zillman<sup>16</sup> ties in with an earlier finding that communication-free or aggression-free messages such as excessive heat or noise may cause a high level of emotional arousal. He proposed that the observed effects of aggressive communications were not so much the consequence of exposure to aggressive stimuli per se as they were the result of the excitatory potential associated with communications. Thus, for example, Zillman found that erotic communications, because they were generally associated with great excitation, tended to intensify post-exposure aggressiveness to a high degree.

All the research outlined above has as its focal point a theoretical model which recognizes that communication messages, especially those featuring dramatic stimuli, can evoke emotional arousal and facilitate subsequent aggressive behavior. The experiments seem to prove at the very least that people exhibit a measurable emotional response to observed violence. What happens though, when these emotional responses are evoked again and again?

## DESENSITIZATION

There have been various attempts to explain the phenomenon of citizen uninvolvedness. This often manifests itself in a situation where passersby fail to come to the aid of a victim within range of their help. Some authors are of the opinion that the abundance of brutality and violence in the mass



media has effectively hardened television viewers to acts of violence, blunting their emotional sensitivity and conscience and reducing their concern.<sup>17</sup>

The above discussion on arousal noted some of the experiments dealing with physiological and emotional arousal when exposed to portrayed violence. However, additional research in the field brings up the possibility that repeated observation of violent scenes may result in a marked decrease in the strength of emotional reactions. The experiments of Berger<sup>18</sup> and Lazarus<sup>19</sup> tend to verify this hypothesis. They exposed their subjects to films of a primitive tribal ritual involving painful and bloody mutilations. They found that viewers became increasingly less emotionally responsive with repeated observations of this type of scene, suggesting a progressive desensitization to a specific type of filmed violence. Victor Kline<sup>20</sup> extended the research a step further by testing the hypothesis that physiological effects are brought about within the child who is constantly exposed to violence on television. His subjects were divided into high and low TV watchers and though the samples were found to differ in the socio-economic dimension, there was no evidence to suggest that this would affect their autonomic/emotional arousal to a violent film. The results of the several studies using two different measures of involuntary response corroborated each other and suggested that some children who are heavy TV watchers (and see more violence) may become habituated or desensitized to violence generally.

While television viewers may become habituated to media violence, it is a large step to the assumption that they will lose their aversion to actual violence when it occurs in a real-life situation. However, some evidence from modern behavior therapy lends credibility to the belief that such a process could occur. Introducing anxiety-provoking stimuli to a relaxed and safe environment has proved effective in reducing and eliminating phobic behavior.<sup>21</sup> Apparently the effect of such a procedure is that phobic patients gradually lose their severe anxiety and are eventually able to tolerate direct confrontation with that which they feared. This suggests that viewers who initially experience intense anxiety in the face of aggressive scenes may possibly learn to tolerate this kind of behavior on and off the screen, after repeated exposure to televised violence in the safety and comfort of their homes. Also, the repetition of media violence may make viewers more willing to actually involve themselves in aggressive actions when provoking circumstances arise.

## IMITATION

Much of human social behavior is learned through observation and imitation. The vividness, fidelity, and ubiquity of television suggest that

children and adults alike may take the behavior they observe on TV as a model for their own, and so behavioral scientists have asked whether viewing violent television has a significant impact on the audience: whether people may learn techniques and strategies of aggressive behavior through their exposure to media violence.

The notion that violence is imitated, as applied to television viewing, is based on the fact of observational learning. However, there are at least two conditions that must be met before the connection can be made:

- the observer must acquire and be able to reproduce what he has seen or heard
- the observer must accept the behavior as a guide for his own actions.

A striking series of studies by Albert Bandura<sup>22</sup> and his associates have demonstrated clearly that under suitable circumstances, observation alone can be sufficient to add novel aggressive responses to the viewer's behavioral repertoire. In addition, recent research has determined that a large proportion of the aggressive behavior learned by observation can be remembered over long periods of time.<sup>23</sup>

The research noted above deals mainly with the acquisition and retention of filmed aggressive responses within the laboratory setting. The results were obtained under highly specific circumstances. The subjects were tested often right after observation and in an environment that closely replicated the filmed situation. There seems to be little doubt that the potential for the aggressive response was learned (which does not necessarily imply that such behavior will be manifested in real life).

There are now numerous documented cases of direct imitation of television violence by children and adults. The more spectacular examples reach the front pages of our newspapers. There is also a great deal of evidence linking the amount of violence seen on television to the degree of aggression manifested in behavior and attitudes. Most of the evidence is to be found in correlational field studies, but some work has been done in this area with the aid of experimental investigations. McLeod, Atkin, and Chaffee<sup>24</sup> examined the relationship between viewing televised violence and a variety of measures of aggressive behavior. They reached the following conclusions: "Among boys and girls at two grade levels (junior high and senior high) the more the child watches violent television fare, the more aggressive he is likely to be. . . . Adolescents viewing high levels of violent content on television tend to have high levels of aggressive behavior, regardless of television viewing time, socioeconomic status, or school performance."

Working with adolescent subjects, McIntyre and Teevan<sup>25</sup> found a consistent relationship between objective ratings of the amount of violence on programs which the subjects reported watching and many kinds of deviant behavior. In one of the few longitudinal studies ever carried out, Lefkowitz et al. designed a test to determine whether the amount of televised violence watched by children at age nine influenced the degree to which they were aggressive ten years later. The investigators reported the following results: "The most plausible single causal hypothesis would appear to be that watching violent television in the third grade leads to the building of aggressive habits . . . a substantial component of aggression at age nineteen can be predicted better by the amount of television violence the child watched in the third grade (age nine) than by any other causal variable measured."<sup>26</sup>

Imitation of televised violence may be contingent upon several mediating factors. For example, imitative aggression seems more likely to occur when the real-life situation appears similar to the observed scene of violence. The consequence of aggression—whether it was rewarded or punished—may operate to elicit or inhibit imitation. The presentation of violence as an effective means of achieving one's goals also may serve to encourage viewers to actually use some of the techniques of aggression that they have learned from the media. Perhaps this last poses a serious problem of its own: beyond teaching specific ways to be aggressive, television may convey the more general message, "violence succeeds."

## VIOLENCE SUCCEEDS

The overt acquisition and acceptance of some violent action portrayed by a mass medium is by no means the only kind of effect television may have. To the extent that television is involved in socializing human personalities, there is an inherent possibility that people will acquire their values and definitions of appropriate behavior from the messages of television.

By and large, there has been very little systematic content analysis of television's offerings. One of the earliest such studies was done by Larsen, Gray, and Fortis in 1963.<sup>27</sup> Eighteen programs were viewed with the aim of exploring and illuminating the goals and methods portrayed on television. The following results were obtained: violent methods were the single most popular means employed by characters to reach desired goals; and socially disapproved methods were more frequently portrayed as successful than were approved methods. In a more recent study, George Gerbner<sup>28</sup> examined the violence messages contained in television entertainment programming. A general impression from the selected messages and their implicit norms suggested that violence often



accompanied conflict, was a successful means of reaching personal ends, and was not usually punished. Law enforcement officers were indistinguishable from others in their use of violence as the predominant method to resolve conflict. In short, violence is presented as a typical means of achieving almost any type of goal, and the use of violence, whether sanctioned or not, is likely to be successful in obtaining such goals.

Television violence has sometimes been justified on the basis of the moral it preaches: the "bad guy" is punished for his misdeeds. However, when in an attempt to show that crime does not pay there is violent retribution, its main effect is still to teach that violence is the way to solve problems. In addition, there is some experimental evidence that disputes the morality lesson of violence. Bandura<sup>29</sup> showed young children two films exhibiting a great deal of inter-personal aggression. The films were identical except for the endings. In one film the aggressor, as a result of his aggressive behavior, was rewarded by acquiring control over the toys and food he desired. In the second film, the aggressive behavior was severely punished and the aggressor defeated in his attempt to control. Nevertheless, in a later evaluation, many children expressed preference for the aggressive character, whether rewarded or punished. Bandura's comment on the meaning of this finding deserves to be quoted:

The finding that successful villainy may outweigh the viewers' value systems has important implications. . . . In most televised programs the "bad guy" gains control over important resources and amasses considerable social and material rewards through a series of aggressive manoeuvres, whereas his punishment is generally delayed until just before the last commercial. Thus children have opportunities to observe many episodes in which antisocially aggressive behavior has paid off abundantly and, considering that immediate rewards are much more influential than delayed punishment in regulating behavior, the terminal punishment of the villain may have a relatively weak inhibitory effect on the viewer.

## PERCEPTION OF A VIOLENT ENVIRONMENT

It is important to consider not only the effectiveness of television in promoting specific kinds of behavior or values, but also to think about the overall impact of television violence on the audience's world view. To begin to understand the nature of this impact, it has been necessary to undertake systematic and careful analysis of programming content, with a view to determining the actual incidence of violent action appearing on home television screens. There have been several such studies. Some examples follow.

In 1960, the U.S. National Association of Educational Broadcasters<sup>30</sup> monitored one week of Los Angeles television. They recorded 144 murders, 13 kidnappings, 7 torture scenes, 4 lynchings, and several miscellaneous acts of violence. The same group carried out a trend analysis which showed the proportion of prime time television devoted to violent action drama rose from 17% in 1954 to 60% in 1961.

In 1964, the U.S. National Association for Better Radio and Television<sup>31</sup> recorded almost 200 hours per week of crime-oriented action drama. In 1968, the same organization<sup>32</sup> announced the now much-quoted estimate that a child of average viewing habits would, over the course of 10 years between the ages of 5 and 15, view the destruction of more than 13,000 persons on television.

In the United Kingdom, a study was undertaken with the cooperation of the BBC to analyze the amount and nature of television violence on British television programs from November 1970 to May 1971.<sup>33</sup> In all, 1558 programs were monitored and a total of 1889 major violent incidents were recorded, a rate of 1.3 per program and 2.2 per hour.

One of the most elaborate and celebrated studies of televised violence was conducted by George Gerbner of the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, during the late 1960s.<sup>34</sup> In 1969, he found that 8 of every 10 drama programs contained violence; the violent acts occurred at a rate of 5 per program and 8 per hour. Gerbner has continued his analysis of network television dramas, issued as annual "violence profiles". In the most recent profile,<sup>35</sup> compiled after monitoring in the fall of 1973, Gerbner reports that the violence index is somewhat lower, but violence remains a staple element of dramatic programming.

In the late summer of 1974, the social communications project of the CRTC's Research Branch undertook an analysis of 55 entertainment programs on two Canadian television stations.<sup>36</sup> A total of 108 violent episodes were recorded in the 36 hours monitored, a frequency of 3 violent acts per hour. The great majority of violent programs and violent acts broadcast were found to occur in productions of American origin.

It is often stated that dramatic programs are just stories and the world they depict is a fantasy world; that there is no reason to suppose that viewers would apply the image derived from the stories to the real world around them. However, there is a considered possibility that the implicit authenticity of television is lending credibility to fantasy productions. Although television entertainment does not provide an accurate picture of the real world, there is some experimental evidence that children,

adolescents, and adults believe it does.<sup>37</sup> Scientists report that many children associate television violence with real-life violence, that crime shows tell about life the way it really is.<sup>38</sup> But the most convincing documentation of this effect comes from the sixth annual violence report issued by George Gerbner and Larry Gross.<sup>39</sup> As part of the study, some viewers were asked to estimate the possibility of encountering violence in their own lives, the proportion of crimes that are violent, and the number of people working in law enforcement—all questions to which television gives answers quite different from the statistics. The results of the study showed that heavy television viewers tend to overestimate the danger of violence in everyday life, significantly more so than light viewers. This "cultivation differential" showed up strongly in those under thirty years of age, the first generation to grow up with television. This evidence suggests that television may be having a harmful cumulative effect: the population as a whole, and certain portions of it in particular, are made more apprehensive about social dangers than actual conditions warrant.

## CONCLUSION

There have been literally thousands of studies dealing with the impact of televised violence on the physiology and psychology of the human being. Many of these investigations represent an academic interest in cause and effect relationships. But a great deal of the research reflects another concern: the influence television may have in shaping our behavior, attitudes, and perceptions. This paper has attempted to highlight some of the more obvious and recurring themes in the research to date.

## **Quelques thèmes de recherche concernant les effets de la violence à la télévision**

### INTRODUCTION

Depuis longtemps, en Amérique du Nord, il existe une opinion selon laquelle ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler les arts populaires ont un effet corrupteur. Parallèlement à l'évolution des masses media, l'attention du public a été tour à tour concentrée sur l'influence nuisible probable du journal, du cinéma, de la bande dessinée, de la radio et de la télévision. Pour de multiples raisons, provenant principalement de sa nature et de ses caractéristiques premières, la télévision demeure maintenant le seul et unique objet de l'inquiétude publique.

Contrairement à la presse écrite ou aux plus anciens media que sont la radio et le cinéma muet, la télévision fait appel à deux sens, simultanément intégrés au message diffusé. Ces deux sens—la vue et l'ouïe—sont les sens les plus développés chez l'homme, ceux auxquels il se réfère le



plus pour recueillir l'information de son environnement. De plus, la télévision exprime le mouvement et l'appareil visuel humain est spécialement conçu en fonction de la perception du mouvement.

La télévision reflète une progression continue des techniques de communications vers une crédibilité intrinsèque au medium lui-même. Cette crédibilité est due en partie à la "vivacité" du medium, cette vivacité étant définie selon les sens auxquels le téléspectateur fait appel. Les media se référant à plusieurs sens sont considérés plus "vivants" que ceux qui n'en touchent qu'un. La télévision et le cinéma sont classés comme des media efficaces par rapport à la notion de "vivacité" définie plus haut. De plus la télévision possède un haut degré de fidélité quant à la correspondance entre l'événement et son compte rendu. Ainsi, cette combinaison de la vivacité et de la fidélité des messages télévisés assure au medium une authenticité intrinsèque et fournit à la télévision une "validation" interne implicite de son contenu.

Une autre particularité marquante de la télévision est son omniprésence comme medium de masse. Les statistiques révèlent qu'actuellement l'accès à la télévision et la possession de téléviseurs ont presque atteint, en Amérique du Nord, le point de saturation. Contrairement au cinéma, la télévision ne requiert pas de frais d'admission, de local sombre ou d'équipement dispendieux. De plus, et contrairement à la presse écrite, la télévision demande aux téléspectateurs un effort intellectuel réduit et n'exige pas d'eux qu'ils sachent lire—en ce sens, son attrait sur les enfants est particulièrement étonnant, leur accès à la télévision étant uniquement limité par leur capacité à manier les boutons pour changer de canal et à transformer l'information audio-visuelle.

Tous ces éléments (la vivacité et la véracité de la télévision, son authenticité inhérente et sa crédibilité, sa disponibilité massive sans égard à l'âge ou la classe sociale) ont placé la télévision dans une position de vulnérabilité en tant qu'objet d'intérêt public.

Depuis les 20 dernières années, la relation entre la diffusion d'émissions violentes et leurs effets sur les attitudes, la perception et le comportement des téléspectateurs a suscité l'intérêt de citoyens inquiets. La préoccupation du public face à la violence dans les media s'est traduite par la création de programmes de recherche et par le support accordé à des études scientifiques de toutes sortes.

Depuis les 25 dernières années, des centaines de recherches sur les effets de la télévision et du cinéma ont été publiées. En général, les conclusions de ces études tentaient d'établir une relation entre le

visionnement de la violence et les différentes formes de comportements anti-sociaux. Toutefois, une révision extensive des écrits sur le sujet nous révèle un grand nombre d'objections, surtout d'ordre méthodologique, qu'ont soulevées les études et leurs conclusions:

- Les études se basent sur le concept scientifique erroné que le comportement humain peut-être étudié avec les méthodes appliquées en sciences physiques.
- Les résultats des études menées dans des conditions de laboratoire ne peuvent être appliquées globalement à la vie réelle.
- Les études faites hors du laboratoire ne peuvent établir un contrôle sur l'impact véritable de plusieurs autres facteurs.
- Les relations entre la cause et l'effet ne sont pas toujours claires et sans ambiguïté.
- La diversité méthodologique des études spécifiques diminue leur valeur comparative.
- La plupart des études traitent uniquement des effets à court terme, et on note une absence de recherches sur les effets à long terme.

L'expression la plus concise et la plus pénétrante des critiques précitées revient probablement à l'éminent sociologue britannique J.D. Halloran,<sup>1,2</sup> secrétaire au "Television Research Committee" et professeur en communications à l'université de Leicester. Cet essai bibliographique est construit autour de six grands thèmes se rapportant à notre sujet: la catharsis, la stimulation, la désensibilisation, l'imitation, l'apprentissage de la violence comme valeur et la perception de l'environnement violent.

## CATHARSIS

Le concept de catharsis est très ancien. Il fait sa première apparition dans les ouvrages d'Aristote sur l'esthétique dans l'art poétique. Dans les traditions philosophiques grecques, il était considéré comme non désirable que des émotions soient avivées; du point de vue des poètes, c'était inévitable. Le génie d'Aristote trouva la façon de résoudre le dilemme en établissant sa fameuse doctrine de la catharsis: "La tragédie est une imitation d'une action complète et valable en elle-même. En suscitant la pitié et la peur, cette imitation réalise la catharsis de telles émotions". En même temps que les émotions sont suscitées, elles sont "purgées", laissant le spectateur dans un état d'esprit plus serein et dans un état plus favorable à la maîtrise de soi.

Certains auteurs notent qu'Aristote appliquait le terme catharsis uniquement aux sentiments tragiques de pitié et de crainte, sentiments qui pourraient être libérés par la participation active de l'auditoire. Cependant, dans l'usage moderne, les théoriciens démontrent que le même phénomène de purge pourrait tout autant s'accomplir—mais cette fois en

fonction des impulsions agressives—à travers une participation par procuration des actes d'agression.

Le plus ardent défenseur contemporain de cette théorie est certainement Seymour Feshback, professeur de psychologie à l'université de Californie. Ses recherches, utilisant surtout les techniques de l'étude sur le terrain ont révélé que l'observation du contenu agressif à la télévision réduisait ou régularisait l'expression de l'agression chez les téléspectateurs.<sup>3</sup> Feshback a émis l'hypothèse que les scènes dramatiques de violence à la télévision fournissaient à ses sujets une occasion de surmonter leurs impulsions hostiles pour les canaliser dans des fantaisies socialement acceptées.<sup>4</sup> Cette proposition trouve un appui dans les écrits psychoanalytiques, qui reconnaissent que l'activité cognitive de la fantaisie—le rêve ou la rêverie—peut permettre aux enfants et aux adultes de retarder et de contrôler l'expression immédiate de leurs impulsions. Si tel est le cas, alors, le processus de catharsis, compris comme le résultat d'une exposition à un contenu agressif pourrait être évalué comme émotionnellement bénéfique et socialement positif.

Mais ce concept des effets de la catharsis n'est pas demeuré incontesté. Les conclusions de Feshback viennent en contradiction avec le courant de la recherche expérimentale<sup>5</sup> et corrélative.<sup>6,7</sup> De fait, plusieurs études ont démontré que, sous diverses conditions, l'observation de la violence augmente l'agressivité ultérieure plutôt qu'elle ne la réduit.

## STIMULATION

L'un des modèles les plus intéressants et les plus complexes reliant les communications et le comportement agressif implique le concept de stimulation. Diverses configurations du modèle proviennent de recherches psycho-sociales sur la relation qui existe entre l'état physiologique d'une personne et son état cognitif; son état cognitif et son comportement ultérieur.

Diverses circonstances peuvent provoquer une stimulation physiologique, et parce que cette stimulation est considérée comme ayant un effet général, des mesures telles que l'observation du rythme cardiaque, de la pression sanguine, de la réponse épidermique à un stimulus et du rythme respiratoire ont été utilisées pour mesurer le changement. Une des premières expériences dans ce domaine a consisté à modifier directement la condition physiologique du sujet en lui injectant de l'adrénaline dans les vaisseaux sanguins.<sup>8</sup> D'autres recherches ont démontré que divers stimuli tels qu'une température fort élevée, l'exercice physique et un grand bruit peuvent provoquer une activation de tout l'organisme.<sup>9,10</sup> De plus, certains auteurs ont émis l'hypothèse que le contenu implicite



d'un message ou d'une présentation était suffisant en soi pour provoquer la stimulation.<sup>11</sup> Toutefois, une découverte est particulièrement intéressante, à savoir que la stimulation interne expérimentée par le sujet est souvent reliée aux conditions sociales qui entourent le participant. Par exemple, quand le sujet est confronté à des partenaires au comportement agressif, il tend à traduire son état de stimulation interne par la colère ou l'agression.<sup>12</sup>

Ces hypothèses fournissent quelques indices sur le rapport qui existe entre la stimulation émotive et le comportement agressif. La plus simple des théories est probablement celle qui soutient que le contenu violent ou agressif provoque chez le sujet une stimulation émotive générale. Le contenu lui-même détermine la situation sociale de telle sorte que le sujet identifie sa stimulation émotive comme de l'agression.<sup>13</sup>

En pareil cas, sa recherche de cohérence cognitive peut mener le sujet à un comportement agressif qui s'accorde avec l'état intérieur identifié. Par ailleurs, Berkowitz<sup>14</sup> a proposé que la stimulation antérieure peut amener une personne à être plus réceptive aux incitations agressives ou "micro-comportements" contenus dans le message. Ces incitations fournissent alors une prédisposition immédiate au comportement agressif. Suivant ce concept, plutôt qu'un état antécédent, c'est l'excitation qui facilite le lien entre le matériel violent et l'action aggressive.

Tannenbaum<sup>15</sup> adhère fondamentalement au modèle proposé par Berkowitz mais propose une variante mettant l'emphasis sur le degré de stimulation provoquée par les stimuli agressifs comme étant plus importants que la seule présence d'incitations agressives. Une récente étude de Zillmann<sup>16</sup> a incorporé une découverte qui date un peu, à savoir que les messages non communicatifs ou non agressifs, tel un bruit ou une chaleur excessifs peuvent causer un niveau élevé de stimulation émotive. Il a fait remarquer que les effets observés des communications agressives n'étaient pas tellement la conséquence d'une exposition à un stimulus agressif en soi mais plutôt qu'ils étaient le résultat d'une excitation potentielle associée aux communications. Ainsi, par exemple, il prouva que les communications érotiques, parce qu'elles sont généralement associées à un état de grande excitation, tendent à augmenter considérablement l'agressivité qui découle de l'exposition à ces stimuli.

Toutes les recherches ci-haut exposées réfèrent, dans une certaine mesure, à un modèle théorique qui reconnaît que les messages—tout spécialement ceux qui représentent des stimuli dramatiques—peuvent provoquer une stimulation émotive et faciliter un comportement agressif subséquent. Les expériences semblent prouver, à tout le moins, que les

gens manifestent une réponse émotionnelle mesurable à la violence observée. Qu'arrive-t-il lorsqu'on provoque ces réponses émotionnelles à plusieurs reprises?

## DESENSIBILISATION

Diverses tentatives ont été faites pour expliquer le phénomène d'indifférence chez les gens. Cette attitude se retrouve entre autres dans une situation où un passant ne vient pas en aide à une victime quand il est en mesure de le faire. Certains auteurs sont d'opinion que l'abondance de brutalité et de violence dans les mass media ont effectivement endurci les téléspectateurs aux actes de violence, émoussant leur sensibilité et réduisant leur conscience et leur implication.<sup>17</sup>

La discussion précédente sur la stimulation a éclairé quelques-unes des expériences en rapport avec la stimulation physiologique et émotionnelle quant à l'exploitation de la violence diffusée. Cependant, des recherches additionnelles dans ce domaine ont soulevé la possibilité que de l'observation répétée des scènes de violence peut résulter une diminution marquée de la force des réactions émotionnelles. Les expériences de Berger<sup>18</sup> et de Lazarus<sup>19</sup> tendent à vérifier cette hypothèse. Les sujets de leurs expériences visionnaient un film sur les rites d'une tribu primitive, lesquels impliquaient des scènes de mutilations douloureuses et sanglantes. Ils ont découvert que les téléspectateurs répondaient de moins en moins émotivement à la répétition de ce type de scènes, suggérant ainsi une désensibilisation progressive face à un type spécifique de violence filmée. Victor Kline<sup>20</sup> a poussé plus loin la recherche en vérifiant l'hypothèse que des effets physiologiques peuvent être remarqués chez l'enfant constamment exposé à la violence télévisée. Les sujets soumis à l'expérience furent divisés en téléspectateurs assidus et occasionnels et bien que les échantillonnages regroupaient des couches sociales différentes, rien n'a pu laisser supposer de façon évidente que ce facteur affecterait leur stimulation émotive automatique face à un film violent. Les résultats de ces études, utilisant deux méthodes différentes pour mesurer les réponses involontaires des sujets, se corroboraient et suggéraient que certains enfants, téléspectateurs assidus (et qui voyaient davantage de violence) pouvaient s'habituer et être désensibilisés à la violence en général.

Bien que les téléspectateurs puissent s'habituer à la violence dans les media, on ne peut tout de même supposer qu'ils perdraient leur aversion pour la violence véritable quand elle se produit dans une situation réelle. Par ailleurs, certaines découvertes découlant de la thérapie du comportement nous portent à croire qu'un tel procédé *pourrait* se produire. L'introduction d'un stimulus d'anxiété dans un contexte sécurisant et

détendu s'est avéré efficace pour réduire et éliminer le comportement phobique.<sup>21</sup> De toute évidence, l'effet d'un tel procédé est que les patients perdent graduellement leur anxiété et deviennent éventuellement capables de tolérer une confrontation directe avec l'objet de leur peur. Ceci suggère la possibilité que les téléspectateurs, ayant tout d'abord expérimenté une anxiété intense à la vue de scènes agressives, peuvent apprendre à tolérer cette sorte de comportement à l'écran et hors de l'écran après une exposition répétée à la violence télévisée dans la sécurité et le confort de leur foyer. De plus, la répétition de la violence dans les media peut avoir comme effet de rendre les téléspectateurs plus disposés à recourir à des actions agressives quand les circonstances les y incitent.

## IMITATION

La plupart des comportements sociaux humains sont appris par l'observation et l'imitation. La vivacité, la fidélité et l'ubiquité de la télévision permettent de croire que les adultes autant que les enfants adoptent les comportements qu'ils observent à la télévision comme modèle. C'est dans ce contexte que les sociologues se sont demandé si le visionnement d'une télévision violente avait un impact significatif sur les téléspectateurs et si les gens peuvent apprendre les techniques et les stratégies du comportement agressif en étant exposés à la violence dans les media.

La notion d'imitation de la violence telle qu'elle s'applique au visionnement de la télévision prend racine dans le processus de l'apprentissage par observation. Toutefois, deux conditions doivent être mises en présence avant qu'une relation quelconque puisse être établie: (1) l'observateur doit assimiler et être capable de reproduire ce qu'il a vu ou entendu; (2) l'observateur doit accepter le comportement illustré comme un modèle de ses propres actions. Plusieurs études pertinentes, que l'on doit à Albert Bandura<sup>22</sup> et à ses associés, ont clairement démontré que dans des circonstances favorables, l'observation peut être suffisante pour que s'ajoutent au comportement du téléspectateur de nouvelles réponses agressives. De plus, de récentes recherches ont également démontré qu'une grande proportion des comportements agressifs, appris par observation, s'imprime dans la mémoire du sujet pour fort longtemps.<sup>23</sup>

Cette recherche traite principalement de l'acquisition et de la rétention des réponses agressives filmées lors de séances en laboratoire. Les résultats ont été obtenus dans des circonstances très spécifiques. Les sujets étaient testés souvent immédiatement après l'observation et dans un environnement qui reproduisait aussi fidèlement que possible les situations filmées. Néanmoins, il semble bien que le potentiel de la



réponse agressive était appris. Par ailleurs, cela n'implique pas nécessairement que ce comportement sera adopté en situation réelle. Pour que ceci se produise, les téléspectateurs doivent avoir adopté dans leurs propres schémas d'actions le comportement formalisé et être prêts à l'exécuter lorsque l'occasion s'en présente.

Nous pourrions maintenant citer nombre de rapports relatant des cas d'imitation directe de la violence à la télévision par des enfants et des adultes. Les exemples les plus spectaculaires font les premières pages de nos journaux. On trouve aussi un bon nombre de signes qui font ressortir le lien entre le degré de violence vue à la télévision et le degré d'agression manifesté dans le comportement et les attitudes des gens. En général, la démonstration de ce lien nous provient d'études sur le terrain corrélatives, quoiqu'on ait aussi exécuté certains travaux en ce domaine à l'aide de recherches expérimentales. Quelques exemples suffiront. Mcleod, Atkin et Chaffe<sup>24</sup> ont examiné la relation entre le visionnement de la violence télévisée et différentes façons de mesurer le comportement agressif. Ils en sont venus aux conclusions suivantes:

Notre recherche démontre que, parmi les garçons et les filles des niveaux primaire et secondaire, plus un enfant regarde les émissions violentes à la télévision, plus il sera vraisemblablement agressif . . . Les adolescents regardant les émissions de télévision à haute teneur violente ont tendance à avoir un comportement plus agressif indépendamment du temps passé à regarder la télévision, de leur statut socio-économique et de leur rendement scolaire.

De même, McIntyre et Teevan,<sup>25</sup> en travaillant avec des adolescents, ont établi une relation étroite entre des évaluations objectives du degré de violence contenu dans des émissions que les sujets de l'étude disaient regarder et différents comportements déviants. Parmi une des recherches effectuées sur les conséquences à long terme qui ont été entreprises, Lefkowitz, Eron, Walder et Huesmann<sup>26</sup> ont mis au point un test pour déterminer si le niveau de violence télévisée regardée par des enfants à l'âge de neuf ans influençait leur degré d'agressivité dix ans plus tard. Les chercheurs en sont venus à ces résultats:

L'hypothèse la plus simple et la plus plausible semble être que le visionnement de la violence télévisée en troisième année conduit à l'acquisition d'habitudes agressives . . . la quantité de violence télévisée vue par un enfant de troisième (à l'âge de neuf ans) peut aider à prédire, mieux que n'importe quel autre variable mesurée, la composante substantielle d'agressivité chez le même sujet à l'âge de dix-neuf ans.

Naturellement, l'imitation de la violence télévisée peut, éventuellement, dépendre de l'effet de plusieurs facteurs. Par exemple, l'agressivité imitative semble vraisemblablement se produire quand une situation réelle présente des similitudes avec les scènes de violence observées. De plus, la conséquence d'un acte agressif, récompense ou punition, peut influencer le comportement d'imitation du sujet en le favorisant ou en l'inhibant. La violence, lorsqu'elle est présentée comme moyen efficace d'atteindre un but, peut encourager le téléspectateur à utiliser quelques-unes des techniques d'agression apprises des media. Peut-être cette dernière hypothèse, en soi, suscite-t-elle une sérieuse inquiétude. En plus d'enseigner des façons spécifiques de perpétrer des actes d'agression et de se livrer à des voies de fait, la télévision peut transmettre un message de portée plus générale: le crime paie!

## LE CRIME PAIE

L'acquisition implicite et l'acceptation d'actions violentes diffusées par les media ne sont pas les seuls "effets" que la télévision peut avoir. Dans une certaine mesure, la télévision joue un rôle dans la socialisation de la personnalité humaine; il est probable que les gens acquerront des valeurs et auront une définition du comportement approprié d'après les messages télévisés.

D'une façon générale, fort peu d'analyses systématiques de contenu des émissions télévisées ont été faites. Une des premières études sur le sujet a été faite par Larsen, Gray et Fortis en 1963.<sup>27</sup> Dix-huit émissions ont été visionnées dans le but d'explorer et d'illustrer les objectifs et les méthodes décrites à la télévision. Les résultats suivants furent obtenus: (1) les moyens les plus populaires employés par les protagonistes pour atteindre les buts désirés étaient les méthodes violentes; (2) les méthodes réprouvées socialement s'avérèrent obtenir plus de succès que celles qui étaient approuvées.

Dans une étude plus récente, George Gerbner<sup>28</sup> examina les messages à contenu violent dans les émissions de divertissement. Une impression générale recueillie des messages sélectionnés et de leurs normes implicites suggèrent que la violence accompagnait souvent un conflit, permettait d'atteindre des buts personnels et qu'elle n'était habituellement pas punie. On ne pouvait distinguer les forces de l'ordre des autres protagonistes puisqu'elles aussi recouraient surtout à des moyens violents pour résoudre les conflits. En bref, la violence est présentée comme un moyen typique d'atteindre n'importe quel but. De plus, l'utilisation de la violence, qu'elle soit sanctionnée ou non, apparaît comme une garantie de succès dans la poursuite de ses fins.

La violence à la télévision a été parfois justifiée au nom même de la morale qu'elle prêche: à savoir que le méchant est puni pour ses méfaits. Cependant, lorsqu'on tente de démontrer que le crime ne paie pas en recourant à un châtement violent, on peint encore la violence comme moyen de solution aux problèmes. Quelques expériences contestent ces leçons de morale qui ont recours à la violence. Albert Bandura<sup>29</sup> montra à de jeunes enfants deux films contenant un haut degré d'agression interpersonnelle. Les films étaient identiques sauf pour la fin. Dans un des films, l'agresseur était récompensé pour son comportement agressif par l'entier contrôle des jouets et des aliments qu'il désirait. Dans le second film, le comportement agressif était sévèrement puni et l'agresseur échouait dans sa tentative de contrôle. Toutefois, dans une évaluation postérieure, plusieurs enfants exprimèrent leur préférence pour le caractère agressif qu'il soit récompensé ou puni. Le commentaire de Bandura sur l'explication de ces conclusions mérite d'être cité:

La découverte qu'une infamie réussie peut modifier le système de valeurs du téléspectateur a d'importantes implications. Dans la plupart des émissions, le méchant possède le contrôle d'importantes ressources et obtient des gratifications sociales et matérielles grâce à une série de manoeuvres agressives. Quant à son châtement, il est généralement reporté jusqu'avant le dernier message publicitaire. Dans ce cas, les enfants ont la possibilité d'observer plusieurs épisodes dans lesquels un comportement agressif et antisocial rapportent abondamment. Considérant que des récompenses immédiates influencent plus qu'une punition reportée pour la régulation du comportement, la punition finale du vilain peut avoir un effet prohibitif relativement faible sur le téléspectateur.

## PERCEPTION D'UN MONDE VIOLENT

Il est important de considérer, non seulement le pouvoir de la télévision de promouvoir certains comportements et certaines valeurs spécifiques, mais il faut aussi tenir compte de l'impact *global* de la violence à la télévision sur la perception du monde qu'en retirent ses téléspectateurs. Pour comprendre la nature de cet impact, il était nécessaire de faire une analyse systématique et détaillée du contenu de la programmation et cela, dans le but de déterminer l'incidence véritable de l'action violente apparaissant à la télévision. Il y a eu plusieurs études de cette sorte; certains aspects en sont ici soulignés.

En 1960, le "U.S. National Association of Educational Broadcasters" a examiné pendant une semaine les émissions des stations de Los Angeles. Ils ont relevé 144 meurtres, treize enlèvements, sept scènes de torture, quatre pendaisons et plusieurs actes variés de violence. Une analyse faite



par le même groupe a démontré que le temps réservé à l'action dramatique violente s'est élevé de 17% en 1954 à 60% en 1961.

En 1964, le "U.S. National Association for Better Radio and Television"<sup>31</sup> a compté presque 200 heures de programmation par semaine dans lesquelles le crime servait à orienter l'action dramatique. En 1968, le même organisme publiait la conclusion maintes fois citée depuis qu'un enfant aurait vu en moyenne, sur une période de 10 ans, soit entre l'âge de cinq ans et 15 ans, la destruction de plus de 13,000 personnes à la télévision.

Une étude faite en collaboration avec la BBC fut entreprise au Royaume-Uni, pour analyser la quantité et la nature de la violence dans les émissions britanniques, de novembre 1970 à mai 1971.<sup>33</sup> En tout, 1,558 programmes furent visionnés et un total de 1,889 incidents violents majeurs furent rapportés, soit un taux de 1.3 par émission et de 2.2 par heure.

Une des plus élaborées et des plus célèbres études sur la violence télévisée a été faite durant les années 1960<sup>34</sup> par George Gerbner de "Annenberg School of Communications" à l'université de Pennsylvanie. En 1969, il démontra que huit émissions dramatiques sur dix avaient un contenu violent. Les actes violents apparaissaient à un taux de cinq par émission et de huit par heure. Gerbner a continué l'analyse des séries diffusées sur les réseaux de télévision et publiée annuellement sous le titre "Violence Profile".<sup>35</sup> Dans le plus récent profil, compilé après le monitoring des séries de l'automne 1973, Gerbner rapporte que l'indice de violence est d'une certaine façon plus bas; toutefois la violence demeure un élément majeur de la programmation dramatique.

Au cours de l'été 1974, la Direction de la recherche du Conseil de la radio-télévision canadienne a entrepris une analyse de 55 émissions de divertissement diffusées sur deux stations de télévision canadiennes.<sup>36</sup> Un total de 108 épisodes violents furent rapportés en trente-six heures de visionnement, soit une fréquence de 3.0 actes violents par heure. La grande majorité des programmes et des actes violents télévisés s'est révélée provenir de productions d'origine américaine.

On affirme souvent que les séries dramatiques ne sont que des histoires, que le monde qu'elles décrivent relève de la fantaisie et qu'il n'y a aucune raison de supposer que les téléspectateurs appliqueraient au réel les représentations qu'ils tirent des séries dramatiques. Cependant, on peut penser que l'authenticité implicite de la télévision assure une certaine crédibilité aux productions de fiction.

Quoique la télévision de divertissement ne donne pas une image exacte de la réalité, quelques expériences démontrent que les enfants, les adolescents et les adultes croient à l'image projetée.<sup>37</sup> Les chercheurs rapportent que plusieurs enfants associent la violence télévisée à la violence vécue et croient que les "crime shows" dépeignent la vie telle qu'elle est réellement.<sup>38</sup> La meilleure illustration de ce phénomène nous vient de George Gerbner et Larry Gross qui publièrent le sixième rapport annuel "Violence Profile".<sup>39</sup> Dans une partie de l'étude on demandait aux téléspectateurs d'évaluer quelles étaient les possibilités pour eux de faire l'expérience de la violence dans leur vie, d'évaluer quelle était la proportion de crimes violents et le nombre de personnes qui veillent à l'application de la loi—questions auxquelles la télévision offre diverses réponses parfois assez différentes de celles fournies par les statistiques actuelles. Les résultats de l'étude démontrent que les téléspectateurs assidus ont tendance à surestimer le danger de violence dans la vie quotidienne et ceci d'une façon beaucoup plus significative que les téléspectateurs occasionnels. Cette différence est illustrée encore plus fortement dans le groupe dont l'âge se situe au-dessous de trente ans—la première génération à grandir avec la télévision.

Tout ceci suggère que la télévision peut avoir un effet cumulatif nuisible: celle-ci rend la population, prise globalement, et certains groupes en particulier, plus inquiète des dangers de la société que les conditions de vie actuelle ne pourraient le justifier.

## CONCLUSION

On compte par milliers les études qui ont traité de l'impact de la violence télévisée sur la physiologie et la psychologie de l'homme. Plusieurs de ces recherches présentent surtout un intérêt académique, mais la plupart dénotent une inquiétude réelle face à l'influence que la télévision peut avoir pour modeler notre comportement, nos attitudes et nos perceptions.

Ce texte a tenté de mettre en lumière les thèmes les plus manifestes et les plus courants de la recherche jusqu'à ce jour. Il est à espérer que les références se rapportant à chaque chapitre fourniront de plus amples renseignements et ouvriront de nouveaux champs d'exploration au lecteur intéressé.





## The industry perspective

**Summary:** Although the use and frequency of violent material on television is greatly influenced by certain mass-marketing elements and the competitive logic of the North American broadcasting system, very little systematic effort has been made to examine the industry perspective on violence in television. Here, the symposium examined the production and system realities of television violence, with particular attention to Canadian production industry problems and potential. Film director Ted Kotcheff examined the question of how quality can be improved in Canadian popular-entertainment programming. The panel discussion which followed was titled "Canadian industry realities: can we do without violence?"

**Résumé:** Même si certains éléments de commercialisation par les media et la logique concurrentielle du système de radiodiffusion nord-américain influencent, dans une large mesure, la présentation d'émissions violentes et leur fréquence, très peu d'efforts réels ont été faits en vue d'examiner quelle est l'approche de l'industrie vis-à-vis de la violence à la télévision.

Au cours de cette partie du colloque, on a examiné la production d'émissions violentes et les réalités du système, en portant une attention particulière aux problèmes et aux possibilités de l'industrie de la production canadienne. Le réalisateur Ted Kotcheff a examiné les moyens d'améliorer la qualité des émissions de divertissement populaire. "Les réalités de l'industrie canadienne: peut-on se passer de la violence?" a constitué le sujet de discussion de la réunion-débat qui a suivi.

## How can the quality of Canadian popular programming be improved?

### Ted Kotcheff

Ted Kotcheff won critical acclaim with his film, "The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz," which won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival. Born in Toronto of immigrant parents, he graduated from the University of Toronto. He worked in a slaughterhouse followed by stints at Goodyear Rubber, and as short-order cook, waiter, and dishwasher. Taking his father's advice that a more rewarding career could be found at the CBC, Kotcheff applied for employment as a writer, was hired as a stagehand, and was discovered by Norman Jewison who made him his assistant. When Jewison moved on, Kotcheff remained with Sydney Newman. By age 24 he was the country's youngest TV director, working on CBC's "General Motors Theatre." He left Canada in 1957 for Britain where he again joined Newman for production of "Armchair Theatre." He was twice voted Britain's top director. In the 1960s Kotcheff expanded into stage and film. His feature films include "Life at the Top," "Two Gentlemen Sharing" which was the official British entry in the 1970 Venice Film Festival, "Billy Two Hats," and "Duddy Kravitz." Future plans include a film based on Richler's "Cocksure," and a social comedy filmed in Los Angeles and called "Dick and Jane."

I was speaking recently to a friend of mine in London, a very distinguished British television dramatist. He asked me what this symposium was about and I told him we were going to discuss whether violence in TV drama is brutalizing the general public. He said, "Well, you tell them it's violence in the general public that's brutalizing TV drama." It reminded me of an incident when I was fifteen. I was working in a diner that belonged to my father, and it was very close to Maple Leaf Gardens. One day a wrestler called Sky High Lee came in with his head covered with bandages, sores, and burns all over his face. I said, "Jesus, Sky—what happened?" He said, "You know, I play the villain. Well, I won last night." It seems that going from the ring to the dressing room, an old lady smashed a bottle on his head and five people stubbed out their cigarettes in his face. His final statement was, "You know, the general public's the worst group of people walking the streets today."

Wrestling is actually a very interesting phenomenon. I always used to wonder why something that was so patently false, so put on, so staged, would be so popular. I've concluded it's like a morality play. There is the hero and the villain. In the middle is the referee, a kind of betrayed authority, the man who never sees the dirty tricks the villain pulls on the good guy. Every time the authority figure turns its back, the villain rubs his fist in the eye of the hero and when the authority figure turns around, the villain pretends innocence. In a curious way, I think that life to the people who watch wrestling is stupid, unfair, and unjust. I don't think it's merely howls of aggression that take place at wrestling matches—I think it's howls for justice. When people like Sky High Lee and the villains triumph, I think there are cries of anguish and pain. I think this is the reason that Sky got punished, and I think that perhaps it's also some kind of insight into why the "police" series on television are so popular.

Early on in my directorial career, I was directing a live television play in the CBC series called "On Camera," sponsored by Maxwell House Coffee. The play had an English setting and at one point the lady of the house invited the Scotland Yard inspector to have tea and crumpets. The agency man was horrified and rushed over and asked me to please change it to coffee. "Coffee," I said, "Who's ever heard of coffee and crumpets?" I mean, when did you last have high coffee? Certainly, advertising people are under no illusions as to the power of the images presented on television, and they work on the principle that people's behavior and living habits can be altered by what they see on the box.

I had a far more disturbing experience in this connection shortly afterwards, when I began to direct TV plays in England. I did a play that was entirely set in the Underground, and we had contacted London Transport to assist us in providing elements for the decor. The public relations man

for London Transport asked for a copy of the script. After he read it he phoned me in a panic because the play opened with a man standing on the subway platform contemplating suicide by throwing himself in front of the train. The P.R. man begged me not to show this scene on television. He told me that at least half a dozen people would commit suicide in exactly the same way the day after the broadcast. I said, "Rubbish, you're just dramatizing." He continued in vain his attempt to dissuade me. After the broadcast, he rang to inform me that five people had jumped in front of subway trains the day after the broadcast. Make of it what you will, it was a disquieting experience for me, to say the least. It was the first time I really began to concern myself with the relationship between myself and my audience. Did television offer models to translate appetites and impulses into action?

As a director, my intention in my work is to change things, to change people, their values, their attitudes, their aspirations. As Arnold Wesker said, "All art leads to socialism," echoing Matthew Arnold's statement that all art aspires to a classless society. I want my programs to have an effect on my audience, to move them, to disturb them, to commit a kind of emotional and intellectual violence on them. For example, I directed a television film called "Edna—The Inebriate Woman," a story of a down-and-out, the woman you see standing on street corners with five overcoats on and all her worldly possessions in two shopping bags. It was in the form of a dramatized documentary and it had a gratifying, overwhelming response from the audience. From the mail I received, I know that attitudes toward the Ednas of the world were changed in a very basic way. So, if one of my TV plays can have what I feel to be a moral effect, how can I deny that it can have an immoral effect? We know that there have been immoral films, as anyone who has seen the Nazi anti-semitic films of the 1930s can testify, and we pass legislation to prevent plays that incite violence against a particular race. But what about violence against a person?

However, as much as I dislike gratuitous and sensationalized depictions of violence, I think I dislike censorship more. I find it stupid, repugnant, and unnecessary. I refuse to hand over to an authority the choice of what I should see and hear and what I should direct. Censors that I've had to deal with are certainly the most curious people I've ever encountered, possessing extraordinarily lurid imaginations and sniffing out double entendres where no one else dreamt they existed. It has often been noted and confirmed by my experience that British censors in film and television are hard on physical violence and liberal on matters of sex and profanity, whereas American censorship is tolerant about violence and ferocious on sex and bad language.



In this respect, I had an amusing experience when I directed a two-hour version of Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men" for ABC. The ABC censor, a very tense young lady, had three notes for me. The first contained the usual list of damns and hells to be cut. After a lot of horse-trading between us—"Listen, I'll give you three damns for one hell," and so on—she and I came to a settlement. The second concerned a scene where George and another farmhand discuss Curly, the boss's son. It's one of the best known scenes in "Of Mice and Men":

George: "Why does Curly always wear a glove on his left hand?"

Farmhand: "He got married to a pretty wife."

George: "So?"

Farmhand: "Glove's full of vaseline."

Well, our censor lady went bananas. This whole scene had to be cut. The explanation that it was a rather touching detail—that Curly wanted one hand free of the cuts and callouses attendant on heavy farm work, a soft hand with which to touch his wife—carried no weight whatsoever with her. Vaseline meant perversion—so out. Only after the star, George Segal, threatened to walk out on the production if this famous scene was cut, was it kept in in a compromised form. A third note discussed a scene near the end of the play. A posse is formed to find Lennie who has inadvertently killed Curly's wife, and Curly keeps repeating: "I'm going to shoot him in the guts, I'm going to shoot him in the guts." The lady said, "You've got to cut 'guts'." So I asked, could we replace it with "I'm going to ram my shotgun down his throat and pull the trigger"? "Oh, yes," she said, "That would be perfectly acceptable."

The problems of censorship are obviously fearsome. I've never met anyone who has been able to explain satisfactorily how we are to distinguish between acceptable depictions of violence and unacceptable ones, or who shall distinguish, and on what principles. I have found, as well, that sometimes, under the guise of professed concern over violence, people were really trying to censor ideas. That's why I think that we should treat a word that has been floating around this conference, *control*, with great care. I think we should resist it very, very stoutly. But I must add that I do agree with Lister Sinclair's statement yesterday that one of the things this symposium should be doing is attempting to define "good violence" and "bad violence". Perhaps, if more good plays are presented on television, restoring some kind of balance in our viewing, the question of censorship will be obviated.

The controversy about violence has been raging in England for the last ten years. It came to a climax when Pamela Hansford Johnson wrote her

book, *On iniquity*, which dealt with the Moors murders: a series of sadistic killings of children, supposedly inspired by the reading of Sade's *One hundred twenty days of Sodom and other stories*. For Johnson and for Mary Whitehouse, that scourge of British television, and others like them, all the ills of modern society are attributable to pornographic literature and violent films and television broadcasts. The way they talked, you would have thought violence was invented ten years ago, that we had lived in an age of gold, and that suddenly, engulfed by a flood of pornography and violence, we have dropped into hell. Well, the history of man is primarily an endless saga of political violence. Peace, civilized behavior, and humane feelings are not the norm from which violence is an aberration. I'm afraid the reverse is true and this is not to be blamed on television and films. In fact, we live in a far more decent and humane society now than ever before. We don't have public hangings, we don't have child labor. Picketing strikers are not shot at as my father was in the 1930s, and I don't see signs on beaches in Toronto any more saying, "Jews and Foreigners Keep Out". I'm not sure that film and television have not played a large part in humanizing our society, far outweighing any damage attributed to them by their detractors.

I know that a lot of film makers' current absorption, especially American film makers, by violent death and physical destruction was initiated by the assassination of President Kennedy and the violence that ensued in the 1960s. Arthur Penn has said it was the film of Kennedy's death that was the direct inspiration for that extraordinary concluding sequence depicting the death of Bonnie and Clyde. "Soldier Blue," showing the American cavalry as butchers spearing Indian babies, cutting women's breasts off, and mutilating old people—which actually happened—was a direct response to the news of My Lai. My own film "Outback" was an attempt to find some answers to the violence in the 1960s and an attempt to deal with the roots of violence in all of us. I think there's a new pursuit of total frankness in the cinema. The prevalent feeling is, we must get rid of all the hypocrisies and lies that have affected films—lies that have got us into so much trouble.

It was supposed by many liberals that with increasing prosperity, higher standards of living, and the spread of social welfare and concern for the poor, the disadvantaged, and the old, crime and violence would diminish and disappear. Instead, in the 1960s there was an inexplicable, irrational, sharp upsurge in violence—urban guerillas, kidnapping, highjackings, political assassination. Crime rates leaped and, horror of horrors, intelligent and wealthy people were involved in the crimes. Liberal nostrums seemed to have failed. Now everyone's looking around for something to blame, and TV and film are the easiest candidates. Television seems to

be a fifth columnist entering the privacy of the home with stealth, subverting morality and not even being noticed. I was surprised yesterday at the nihilism displayed by the morning panel which felt that discussing violence on television was irrelevant. The panelists distrusted and disliked the television medium itself and if they had their way they'd get rid of all television. Well, for someone like me who makes his living dreaming up dreams for public consumption, this attitude seems strangely unreal, leading to a dead end. One of the panel reduced television to a bombardment of electrons. Well, that's like saying a film is a piece of celluloid 10,000 feet long and 35 millimeters wide, painting is a hunk of canvas, and a novel some mashed-up pine trees. I think the medium is neutral. We should abandon formalistic discussions and instead be discussing what we should put on the damn thing.

That leads me to the question of what Canadian drama ought to be doing and whether or not it should differentiate itself from the American treatment of drama. First of all, I think we in Canada have already differentiated ourselves from the American television industry. We have chosen the British model, a mixture of commercial television and public broadcasting—a healthy marriage, I think. Secondly, there's hardly any drama on American television worth speaking about for us to use as a model. The one driving force behind television in America is the maximization of profits, and the sole justification of a program is its financial success measured in terms of share of the audience and cost per thousand viewers. Television is conceived of not as a means of communication, but as a sales instrument to promote commodities. People who work in American television are, in my experience, irretrievably compromised and their programs are totally unwatchable. The divorce between the intelligentsia, if I can use such an old-fashioned word, and television is complete. The best minds and talents avoid it completely. With minor exceptions, I can't think of a single writer, producer, or director of any merit working in American television drama. And this is not merely my opinion. I can tell you that in Los Angeles to write or direct for television is to proscribe yourself forever from working in film. The film industry feels that anyone who would work on American television series, with its incredibly low standards of quality in production, must be a tasteless hack. I must add that this feeling does not apply to anyone working in British or Canadian television.

There was a great period in American television drama in the early 1950s—the "Philco-Goodyear Playhouse", "Playhouse 90", "Studio One"—when interesting plays were written by dramatists such as Reginald Rose and Rod Serling, and directed by people like Franklin Shaffner,



Robert Mulligan, and John Frankenheimer. The reason that these anthology drama series were killed was explained to me by an account executive for General Motors. He said that the plays were just too real. The presentation of real, human problems aroused serious emotions. The endings, as in life, were inconclusive. Often these plays depressed and upset. As a result, in spite of very high ratings for "Philco-Goodyear Playhouse," the sales figures for Philco radios and Goodyear tires were not going up. Why? Because people made gloomy associations with these products. Well, whether this was true or not, a television executive in America once told me that if the material the television audience sees is too demanding emotionally, if they have their emotions wrung out, it means they're not going to be able to sit and watch all night which, after all, is the desideratum. So give them formula drama, straight, vigorous-action stuff. Like junk food, you can eat lots of it because it contains no nourishment. As a result, all significant writing and directing talent have abandoned the medium in America. Ultimately this is why there is so much violence on television. As Raymond Chandler said, "When in doubt, have a man come through the door with a gun," the easiest way to involve an audience. Conflict is basic to drama, and this is the most basic kind of conflict you can have. One mustn't forget, as David Helwig noted yesterday, the sheer quantity of production which is required to fill thirteen channels with sixteen hours of programming a day. It has to be pulp and formula—there's just too much air time to fill.

I'd like to describe to you how a typical TV drama episode, in this case an episode of "Mannix," is written. I think it's very revealing. I was in a writer's office in Los Angeles a couple of weeks ago when the phone rang. It was the story editor of "Mannix" and the dialogue with my writer friend went as follows: "You need an episode of 'Mannix' right away? what subject? a water subject? underwater? oh, you had an underwater episode two weeks ago. On the surface then? Okay, to be shot in the marina at Marina Delray. When do you want it by? [this was a Monday] Wednesday, OK, no sweat." He hung up and crossed to his filing cabinets, of which he had many, and pulled out the "Mannix" fact sheet. The fact sheet gives a breakdown of the character, explaining what is allowed and not allowed in terms of both the character and the star. Mannix will never be seen without a shirt or with his hair mussed. Mannix will never be seen drunk, Mannix is chivalrous with ladies, austere with tarts and homosexuals, etc., etc.

He pinned up the set of rules on a large bulletin board, he went back to the filing cabinet headed A to Z containing different openings. He went through, riffled down through the cards, down to W for water. My mind boggled when I noticed that the card before "water" was "wasps". He had

four different cards of "water hookers", as they are called—those thirty-second grabbers at the beginning of the show. Next came a three-and-a-half minute segment called "the problem" in which client meets Mannix and tells him she is in desperate trouble: she's been made pregnant by an elephant. Commercial break. Next comes a seven-minute segment: Joe Mannix goes out looking for the elephant, finishing with suspense action leaving the hero in jeopardy. Next came a four-minute segment, then another seven-minute segment, all with their appropriate names, and finally there was a seven-minute "home stretch", with a two-minute thing called "the diver", a twist that puts the hero in sudden trouble. The "diver" is necessary because it is feared that during the home stretch, which is usually conventional, the audience will switch channels. At the end of the home stretch, there was another commercial break, the one-minute wrap-up, another commercial break and then, finally, the thirty-second teaser for next week. My writer friend just kept pulling out filing cards appropriate for the various segments. He shuffled them about and pinned them up on the board. He finished an hour script in a day and a half and delivered it on Wednesday. He told me there are so many commercial breaks in a typical show that the only way to hold up the whole tottering structure is through continual jolts of violence. Constant impact is looked for. He told me he knows two writers who work together: one starts at the beginning, one at the end, and they meet in the middle. Violence is prevalent in these series because they can be written no other way. Subtlety of theme and character, which are the ordinary tools of a writer, are not required and in any case they're quite beyond any person working on the series. It's not necessary to attack these shows. As Ezra Pound said, "It's meat for the house dog." There's no use criticizing a chocolate bar for not providing illumination. It was not meant to. There is always going to be a lot of filler on television; it's an inevitable part of the whole medium.

I personally subscribe to the BBC philosophy: the aim of television should be to inform, to educate, to entertain. I feel it is entirely possible to have a popular, commercial, dramatic television series without debasing it the way American television has. There is an area where the good and the popular overlap and this is what responsible people working in television should always be aiming for. It's not easy. It's much easier to go in for the machine-made product. It takes effort, imagination, persistence, but it can be done. I've always directed both my films and my television work in a commercial context, and that has always been my approach: to do interesting plays that have some validity, significance, some comment on the human experience, but are still capable of attracting a large audience. This is Sidney Newman's philosophy and he proved it could work by producing what is still, in my experience, the best and most successful commercial anthology television drama series ever done: "Armchair

Theatre" in England. He was not against giving people what they want, which is the usual defence for most of the programming on television, but he also felt a responsibility to extend the frontiers of popular taste. His crowning success, I suppose, was to produce an original Harold Pinter play for television which came third in the top ten ratings.

Well, enough of the philosophy. What concrete things can be done to improve the quality of popular television drama in Canada? I can tell you in one word: money. There are few problems money won't solve and getting a good drama series is not one of them. You need money to develop good scripts, the source from which all virtues flow, and you need money to produce them properly. There's no magic solution to improving popular entertainment. If what follows seems to demonstrate a firm grasp of the obvious, I hope you'll excuse me. Sometimes it's necessary to go back to basics.

First of all, I think it's imperative that we have a series on Canadian television that does only original Canadian television plays fifty-two weeks of the year. To do this, you need money to commission plays freely. You can't wait around for masterpieces to arrive through the mailbox. You must create a situation that allows talent, if it exists, to reveal itself. When I first went to England, I worked as a director on "Armchair Theatre" before Sidney Newman arrived. We were doing tired old stage plays and already-produced American television plays. When Sidney Newman became producer of "Armchair Theatre," he passed an absolute law—no stage plays and no American television plays. This was done for three reasons. First, plays written specifically for the medium always work better. Second, and more important, television had a role to play in society: to reveal what was going on, to delve into the changes that were occurring, to interpret what was happening around the audience he was broadcasting to. Third, like Ezra Pound, he wanted to make it new. It's more fun. All the directors went along with it at first, but there were no decent writers. The scripts were terrible, we got bad reviews, we got worse. Finally, the four or five directors that were involved in "Armchair Theatre" went to Newman in a mutinous mood. We told him this was just a disastrous policy, but he was adamant. He persisted, all the time commissioning, taking chances, throwing away the worst plays—that's where the money comes in—and only making us do the next but worst. Well, suddenly, out of the woodwork came Harold Pinter, Alun Owen, Angus Wilson, John Mortimer, and a host of other extraordinary original talents. He made them work with a wide audience, with his insistence on clarity and good story-telling. He was a popularizer and urged the use of all the showmanship tricks to make the plays work. It was obligatory to amuse, to intrigue, to move, to grip, to engross, to dazzle, to surprise, to



mystify, to illuminate, to entertain in the complete sense of the word. (Watching certain plays done on the CBC, I often feel that they've abandoned this. They think good story-telling is something to be embarrassed about.) I feel strongly that we must try the same things here in Canada. No one can predict the results, but we will never know unless we provide an opportunity for the budding playwrights in this country to raise their voices.

We must do fifty-two original plays a year to create some kind of continuity, so that one can learn from failures and build on success. It will also provide a living for directors and actors. The way it is now, I see talented directors languishing and talented actors are obliged to turn to something else in order to survive. I recently directed a play for the CBC and in it, giving a splendid performance, was a man you all know, Mavor Moore. He told me he had not been offered an acting job for five years. That's a disgrace, and the whole of the CBC should be ashamed of itself. Unless you have a body of functioning actors out working all the time, you cannot have good popular drama, or drama of any kind.

Canada needs such a drama series to provide us with a picture of ourselves in this incredibly variegated country in which we live. We are a fragmented country with a still rather weak national and social cohesiveness. We are a country that knows almost nothing about itself, and our experiences in Canada are incredibly different.

I've just read an extraordinary film script by a Dukhobor girl. I'm working on *Lark in the clear air*, a hilarious picture of Irish-Canadians you'd never have imagined existed in Ontario. I'm considering another book for a film, Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, dealing with the exotic Métis in northern Alberta and Saskatchewan. I've just read "John and the Missus" by Gordon Pinsent, dealing with the exotic Irish coal miners in Newfoundland, and if I told you about my upbringing in a Bulgarian village in the middle of Toronto, you wouldn't believe me. All these experiences, it seems to me, are highly communicable in dramatic form. Drama provides us with an ideal opportunity to examine what we share with one another, to try to delineate the Canadian experience—where we've been, what we are, and perhaps where we should be going. No one will need worry about the Canadian identity or about differentiating ourselves from the U.S. It will be Canadian, made by Canadians for Canadians about Canada, and I think that what is distinctive about us will emerge. And we are distinctive, make no mistake about it.

Secondly, why isn't there always on Canadian television a multi-part serialization of a Canadian novel and/or a treatment of one of our

Canadian heroes? "Jalna" was done. It wasn't the success they wanted it to be so the CBC quit. "The National Dream" was a success but why aren't we building on it? Why wasn't *Duddy Kravitz* serialized years ago? And what about Richler's *Son of a smaller hero* or *The street*? What about Gabrielle Roy's *Where nests the water hen*? What about Rudy Webb's *Temptations of Big Bear*? It would make a fantastic series. What about the aforementioned *Halfbreed* by Maria Campbell, or *Barometer rising* by Hugh MacLennan, set against the Halifax explosion, or *The luck of Ginger Coffee*? What about a series of dramatized short stories—Sinclair Ross' *Lamp at midnight*, Morley Callaghan's extraordinary collection of short stories? What about Alice Munroe's *Lives of girls and women*, anything by W.O. Mitchell, the novels of Robertson Davies; Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence? What about a series about the Acadian heroine, Evangeline? What about Papineau, Madeleine de Verchères, Dollard des Ormeaux? These are just a few of the things that I'd like to direct.

Thirdly, let's develop some good comedy series. I dislike humorless people, and I dislike humorless art. If you want a healthy counterpart to all that violence, do comedy. Canadians often say that we have no sense of humor and that we have no talent for comedy. Rubbish! A lot of the best comedy being done in Los Angeles is being written by Canadians. In fact, at one point, it was estimated that about 40% of U.S. comedy series were being written by Canadians.

Finally, I think we need an "Omnibus"-type program. "Omnibus" is a kind of high-brow program in England that goes on every Sunday night. In Canada, we should be working in an English-language tradition and a French-language tradition. We need a drama series for the best foreign plays, plays from the classical repertory, the unusual, the experimental, and the difficult—all the way from Plato's *Symposium* to the latest hit in London, New York, or Paris. I think it's important that, in our feverish pursuit of identity, we not get parochial.

When I first started working for the CBC in 1952, everything I just outlined to you was happening. We had "General Motors Theatre" doing original Canadian hour plays. We had "On Camera" presenting original half-hour plays. There were hour and a half specials for government savings bonds, featuring original Canadian plays. There was a science-fiction series called "Space Command," directed by the present head of CTV, Murray Chercover. There was a classic Canadian series, an adaptation of Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine sketches of a little town*. There were the children's adventure series "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," "Treasure Island," and others, and then there was my old-time favourite, "The Plouffe Family" series. And they had a great idea. First they did it in

French, and then either that night, or the next day, they did it in English. I think it's a marvelous idea. Why hasn't there been more of that kind of bilingual production from Montreal?

Going back even further, we have the glories of CBC radio that made us famous all over the world—that wonderful "Stage" series produced by Andrew Allen on Sunday night to which I, and so many others, owe a tremendous amount. The "Stage" series did exactly what I'm talking about: original Canadian plays by Lister Sinclair, Len Peterson, and many others; adaptations of Canadian books like *Two solitudes* by Hugh MacLennan; as well as the classics and new writing from abroad.

The tradition was there, and it was carried over into the early days of CBC television, and then it was abandoned. Well, it has to be revived, and I think there are people who want to. John Hirsch, head of CBC Drama, subscribes to a lot of what I've said and is even now working to implement it. In commercial television, I know that Murray Cherkover has just commissioned the adaptation of Max Braithwaite's *Why shoot the teacher?* and a script about a famous western character, John Ware, both for future production. And these are encouraging beginnings. Let's give it our total support. You know, we sit around here worrying about violence on television drama when the problem really is that there is no Canadian television drama for violence to be in. Canada has the energy, the talent, the confidence, and the money to do it—so let's do it.

## **Panel discussion**

### **Canadian industry realities—Can we do without violence?**

**Ken Sobol**

**Les Brown**

**Ralph Ellis**

**Raymond David**

**Ken Sobol**

Ken Sobol has combined successful careers as a film writer, author, television critic, and journalist. Mr. Sobol received his master's degree in English literature and drama from Columbia University, and he is the author of *Babe Ruth and the American dream*. He has been story head at Filmmation of Hollywood, television critic for the *Village Voice*, and has written a variety of material for educational television, including the Emmy-winning program "Inside Out."

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Following Ted Kotcheff is a hard act, especially since I am probably the



only Hollywood hack present, one of those people he condemns so strongly. I'd be the last person to argue with him on that subject, but there is one point about it that perhaps should be made. Hollywood allowed me and many other writers a chance to learn, and that's probably the thing most lacking in Canadian television. If you're going to write, if you're going to practice writing, if you're going to learn, you don't learn on "Philco-Goodyear Playhouse" or "Performance." You need places to be bad, and certainly Hollywood supplies those. The problem comes after you've been bad, learned how to be bad very well. Most writers in Hollywood are by that time locked into the economic structure with their swimming pools and the rest of it, so they continue doing it for the rest of their lives.

The subject I'm supposed to deal with is children's television. Most of my media experience has been in this area, so I'll devote all my time here to a brief analysis of the relationship of violence, whatever that is, to children's programming.

I should explain that when I talk about children's programming today, I'm excluding shows intended for pre-school audiences. For one thing, I think far too much emphasis is given that area to the detriment of programming for the much larger and more receptive six-to-fourteen age group. For another, not even the American Broadcasting Company at its most bloodthirsty ever dared to present a really violent nursery school show—although I've no doubt it was contemplated at one time or another—and so "Sesame Street," "Captain Kangaroo," "Romper Room," and so on are pretty well outside the scope of this panel.

For the purpose of this symposium, children's television can be divided into three categories: shows originating on commercial American networks, shows originating or distributed by PBS, and shows produced by and for Canadians. The last category unfortunately barely exists, at least in terms of general entertainment programming. In my opinion, that absence represents probably the worst failure of Canadian television, and I'll come back to that later.

On the American commercial networks, children's programming basically means Saturday-morning programming. In the 1966-67 season, Fred Silverman, then head of children's programming at CBS, cashed in on the income potential of defenceless children. Saturday morning's peak hours, ten to twelve, can deliver as many as 13,000,000 viewers, almost all between the ages of three and fourteen. At the outset, when the time period was entirely unregulated, as many as eight commercial minutes were shoe-horned into each half-hour of actual program time. Earnings for that time slot were, and still are, enormous, accounting for outlandish

percentages of total network profits. Not surprisingly, network competition in that time slot quickly became every bit as cut-throat as in the evening. Also not surprisingly, the modern Saturday-morning era was founded on action-adventure cartoons. Given the budgetary and production structure of Saturday morning—a fixed, very low budget, a huge number of self-contained segments to be delivered in a limited time, and the pre-set number of network reruns before syndication—the only production alternative was a highly structured formula. The studios had to cut down drastically on actual animation, substituting camera tricks, sound effects, and greatly increased amounts of dialogue, simplifying background, standardizing layouts, and concentrating on building up a large library of stock shots that could be used again and again in a series. It soon became apparent that action-adventure with human or humanoid characters lent itself far more easily to this kind of limited animation than the traditional cartoon comedy. To put it very simply, it takes a lot more effort and expense to make a visual gag work than a face stuck onto a fist followed by a frame-filling “splat” does. Add to action-adventure the average child’s appetite for mayhem, not to mention that of the average network executive, and this happy meeting of production necessity and sales dynamite soon turns Saturday morning into the talking equivalent of the comic-book rack in your local cigar store. This is essentially the same point that Ted Kotcheff was making about the crime shows: violence is built into the production process—there’s no way you can write these shows without eventually resorting to violence in one form or another.

In the first years the super-hero cartoons were often genuinely vicious. Shows such as “Spiderman,” and “The Fantastic Hulk” were ugly to the point of the grotesque. Even the less extreme series—“Superman” or “Batman”—had a staggering high-bruise quotient, with each new falling body being resoundingly cheered by the networks. When, inevitably, troubled parents and concerned Congressmen reacted in the late 1960s, a great many interdictions, still theoretically in force today, were handed down by the networks. There were to be no guns, no blood, no triple-fanged snakes, no giant spiders, no mad dwarfs, no poison fishhooks—and all these occurred on just one show. While that eliminated much of the overt violence, the “bad guys doing something nasty to the good guys” formula remained untouched, and is still the essence of Saturday-morning action-adventure.

In a recent Saturday’s episode of “Valley of the Dinosaurs,” for example, two kids spend the entire show under attack by various prehistoric monsters. In the same hour on “These are the Days,” a nostalgic cartoon ripping off “The Waltons,” the story revolved around whether or not the hero would get beaten up by the school bully. And a dozen similar

examples are available every weekend. Even the comedy cartoons, "Archie," "Scooby-Doo," "The Flintstones," and so on, which were introduced to counter public criticism of the super-heros, are based on the same aggression-retaliation formula, although theoretically in humorous form. Reggie pushes Jughead off a dock, somebody steals Scooby-Doo's favorite collar, and so on. Some, in fact, such as the "Pink Panther," which began only twelve years ago as a highly abstract and stylized theatrical cartoon, now contain enough beating up and bone-breaking to make the Fantastic Hulk himself, or itself, think about a quieter line of work. I don't think that any one individual cartoon of this kind has an effect, but a cumulative three or four hours might.

In all, the program breakdown isn't very different on Saturday morning prime time today than it was in 1966. From ten to twelve there are available four and a half hours of action-adventure, one and a half hours of comedy. So, despite the cosmetic news-and-learning inserts, and the enforced decrease in commercial minutes, the answer to the question "can we do without violence?" would seem to be, "no." It is built into the production process and into the competitive structure as well.

Turning very briefly to the American non-commercial kid shows, I want to make one quite different point. In the CRTC notes I received in preparing for this panel, the question is asked, "why does television spend so little effort trying to deal factually or imaginatively with the issues that concern a society?" Assuming that is a proper goal for children's programming, the American show that has succeeded best in meeting it has been "Inside Out," which won the Emmy a couple of years ago as the best children's series. It's a series dealing with what the school psychologists are pleased to call "life-coping skills" for average eight-to-twelve-year-olds. Part of it was produced by OECA here, the rest in the United States.

The American portions of the series, which was considered the most realistic show in years, were saturated with violence and violent situations. At the initial production meetings, the OECA group was offered its choice of the battered child, the violent divorce, the bully situation, death, the embittered father, to mention only a few topics. In our Canadian way we eventually selected such themes as "what is help and responsibility?" but what impressed the native-born Canadians was the almost obsessive concern with the more violent and antagonistic elements of life. What I'm getting at is that the reality of an American child's life is not the same as the reality of a Canadian child's. Violence and violent response is an intrinsic part of American life, of the American imagination and deeply-felt mythic ways, that is quite foreign to Canadians. One of the great dangers for Canadian television in general is taking American psychological reality



as a model for Canadian reality and trying to build programs around it, instead of making programs indigenous to Canada. Aggression is only one aspect of American life, of course, and in fact some of the PBS shows, particularly "Zoom," have taken fresh and imaginative approaches. But by and large, American television has failed to come up with anything very valuable for children over the age of five, and even most of the non-commercial programming seems manipulative and unaffectionate. That brings me to the Canadian efforts, and I must say I'm talking only about English-Canadian shows.

Last autumn two major general-entertainment shows aimed specifically at primary school children were introduced, OECA's "Monkey Bars" and CBC's "Doctor Zonk and the Zonkins." Both were failures, the former an honorable dog, the latter a bizarre catastrophe. And together they perfectly illustrate the point I've been attempting to make. Both shows were based on that same aggression-retaliation, "somebody out to get somebody else, bad adults versus good kids" format that has been the staple of Saturday morning. My guess is that the producers spent too much time trying to be bigtime, looking at the American Saturday morning competition until they began to compete with it on its own terms. And of course they lost. In the case of "Doctor Zonk," the producer set out openly to imitate a commercial American format. At the initial organizing session, to which I was invited, one of the show's bosses announced that they wanted "a combination of 'The Monkeys,' 'Laugh-In,' and 'Banana Splits,'" a statement that not only blew my mind, but blew my person out the door as well, never to return. What they eventually got was what a Toronto critic called the worst show he had ever seen. OECA may have failed, but at least it set out to counteract the American networks in a time period when it really matters, on Saturday morning. The CTV network is also belatedly giving it a try this coming season. I must say, I find it astonishing that the CBC, in a time period which has by far the greatest concentration of children all week, devotes itself entirely to showing aged reruns of American cartoons and movies. But then, being only a landed immigrant, I probably don't fully comprehend the significance of "Tarzan" and "The Flintstones" to the Canadian national character.

My basic point in this brief and very broadly drawn presentation is that if you imitate the predominant American forms, you get American content. And that usually involves violent responses, generational conflicts, and aggression in one form or another. They're intrinsic to most commercial programming in the U.S. and present in the non-commercial shows. If there is to be any respectable children's programming in English Canada, it must ignore most of the dominant U.S. formula and start from scratch,

beginning with that crucial ingredient so pathetically lacking in most American shows, a genuine affection for children and interest in their lives.

### Les Brown

Les Brown is the television correspondent for the *New York Times*. He spent some twenty years covering the broadcast media for *Variety*, and was radio and television editor there from 1965 to 1973. He has written two books, *Television: The business behind the box*, and *Electronic media*, a high-school primer. He is a member of the editorial board for *Television Quarterly*, and is a member of the T.V. Film Advisory Committee for the New York State Council on the Arts.

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The familiar metaphors for violence on television are medical and culinary. We have heard violence spoken of as a disease, as if it were a virus for which there may be a cure. Senator Pastore, who likes "The FBI"—one of the most consistently violent shows on television—seems to think of violence as a flavoring, an essence, or a seasoning that can be increased or reduced in TV entertainment according to the standards adopted by the industry at the behest of government. I reject both metaphors for failing to identify the problem properly. As a journalist who has covered TV in the U.S. for about 22 years, I suggest a military analogy. The three TV networks are perpetually at war. Their programming councils closely resemble military strategy sessions. Each new television season is a campaign, each time period of the day a battlefield. Programs are the weaponry, violence is heavy ammunition, brutality is dynamite. The struggle is over the approximately \$2.5 million that advertisers are inclined to spend in network television every year. Each network's share of that gorgeous pie is largely determined by its share of the viewing audience. Any network that might, out of conscience, eliminate violence from its arsenal, runs the danger of having its head blown off.

NBC made a move in 1973 to clean up its Saturday morning children's block, substituting a few live-action entertainment shows for some of its violence-oriented cartoons. It got clobbered by the rival networks and ran third in one of television's most profitable program areas. Things improved for NBC when the other networks, under government pressure, also adopted tamer forms of programs.

In U.S. television, a program is scheduled with a view to harming the shows that are in competition with it. This is called counter-programming. Of all the arts and entertainment media, television alone seeks to kill its own. On Broadway a few smash hits enliven the whole theatre scene; a hot nightclub act can be a boon to cabaret business generally. When there

are two or three big box-office movies in circulation, they help even the lesser movies to sell tickets. But when there is a red-hot TV show, it usually demolishes two others in opposition.

This season CBS presented a two-hour preview of a new dramatic series, "Beacon Hill," which, as you know, was inspired by "Upstairs, Downstairs." CBS presented it ahead of the new season in hopes of winning an audience for it against the relatively easy competition of summer reruns. ABC met the strategy by pitting against it the rerun of a fairly successful TV movie, "The Legend of Lizzie Borden." "Beacon Hill" was essentially a character drama. Some might call it a classy soap opera. It is in any event a program that could have done great credit to the medium, if it survived.\* "Lizzie Borden" is basically an exploitation film on the legendary case of a woman accused of axe-murdering her parents. ABC's intention with "Lizzie" clearly was to bludgeon "Beacon Hill," to keep it from winning friends out of season. There is nothing disreputable about the tactic. It is how the game is played, or how the war is fought. Possibly the violence that we see on the tube takes its inspiration from the implied violence in the television system itself.

Contrary to what many who have spoken here suppose, violence does not proliferate on television because it sells better than other shows, or because it is the most popular of entertainment genres. Violence is on the increase because it is less likely to fail than other program types that lend themselves to formula treatment. The most popular prime time shows last year, those that dominated the Neilson Top Ten, were situation comedies. The police/private-eye/adventure shows tended to collect at the second level of popularity, positions 11 to 30 on the Neilson chart. Since that is the case, you might reasonably wonder why the networks have not overwhelmingly gone for comedy. The reason is that comedy is more difficult to bring off, and has a higher failure rate than action-adventure. Let me explain here that television programs do not generate audience. Very rarely does a television program draw an audience to the set, and the networks know this from 25 years of experience. People watch television, not programs: first they decide to watch television, then they decide what they will watch. Viewing levels, no matter what programs are cancelled and new programs brought in, remain approximately the same from year to year. They increase as the population increases. At seven-thirty at night, which is the beginning of prime time, there are approximately 75 million people before the set in the U.S. At nine o'clock, which is the peak of prime time, the number of viewers grows to about 90 and sometimes 100 million people, and begins to decline after that. The age

\*"Beacon Hill" was cancelled in mid-season.



demographics, of course, become favorable after nine o'clock because presumably the young and the old go to bed. So what you have after nine o'clock are young adults, which is the audience to look for. In order to get a bigger audience for the show, you have to take it away from another network because the audience is going to be the same. This is how programs compete.

Failure is a catastrophe in American commercial television. When ratings fall, the price of the corporation stock also drops, and heads roll. Last September, CBS and NBC got off to fast starts in the new season, leaving ABC far behind. The ABC loss of position was reflected in a decrease in profits for the company in the fourth quarter. By November, the president in charge of television was replaced by another executive within the company, one skilled in program strategy. In short order the new president brought in a raft of new shows, most of them oriented to violence. The move was successful. ABC gained ground and the corporate powers were vindicated in their choice of Frederick Pierce as president.

Fred Pierce is a good and decent man. I know him well. He's a family man. He has displayed a profound understanding of the mass television audience in his previous posts with the network. He did what was right for the company, giving stockholders the assurance that ABC was on the move again. Meanwhile, "SWAT" and "Baretta" have joined the array of violent shows as full-fledged hits. "SWAT," one of several that Pierce brought in, bids fair to steal the honors from "Kojak" as the most violent show on television. Speaking of "Kojak," why did CBS schedule it on Sunday night, traditionally the family night in American television? From nine to eleven, CBS has to cope with a strong ABC movie and the NBC Mystery Movie when "Columbo," "McLeod," "McMillan and Wife," and the new entry with Tony Curtis, "McCoy," rotate. Viewing is heaviest on Sunday nights. Premium advertising is at stake. Therefore, "Kojak."

Movies have played the key role in the escalation of violence on television. Early in the 1960s, when television was murdering the movie business, NBC began to buy movies for prime time. By 1965, movies were program staples for all the networks. Within the next two years, each network had two or even three movies on its schedule each week. The movies were important to the network because they were drawing into the theatres the very audience that television wanted most to reach, persons 18 to 49, or even better, 18 to 35. At the same time, in order to survive against television, theatrical movies became more sexually explicit and more violent than ever. During the late 1960s, the movies on network television wreaked devastation on the orthodox TV programs slotted against them. The Hollywood studios which produced shows for television asked the

networks for a new set of standards that would enable them to compete effectively with movies. Standards at the networks were relaxed and last year movies were not the potent fare they used to be on television. A network president explained that "we've learned how to make TV shows that can compete with movies," meaning shows that are more sexually explicit, more violent.

I'm not a social scientist and I have never conducted any extensive formal research, but I don't know how any thinking person in this room can doubt for a minute that a medium which boasts of being able to sell anything—products, service, or candidates—would not also be effective in selling anti-social attitudes or violent behavior. Joseph Clapper of CBS recently conducted some research on two children's series that were designed to promote pro-social values. They were "Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids" and "The Harlem Globetrotters Popcorn Machine." His data showed that the two programs were very successful in achieving their positive objectives, promoting pro-social values. It seemed to me he also proved that programs that did not promote pro-social values but were dealing in anti-social values were selling those, too.

As a critic, as a parent, and as a member of the human race, I deeply resent being cannon fodder in a war between corporations for a multi-billion dollar prize. On strictly anecdotal evidence and gut feeling, I consider television's preoccupation with aggression, violence, and brutality to be harmful to the society I live in. On the other hand, I oppose intervention by the government, not just for First Amendment reasons, but because from what I have seen in my years at this work, it is usually clumsy, politically expedient, and in the end only cosmetic. We now have a family-viewing period which I expect will be short-lived. They've cleaned up violence from eight to nine. However, as soon as one network gets in trouble it will reach for the old panacea, and then they'll all be back at it.

A few years ago there was a big crackdown on violence. The Pastore committee created a climate in which the heat was on and the networks knew they had to do something to deal with the problem. So they found a new kind of violence: automobile violence. For a whole year we saw car crashes and heard screeching of brakes and were exposed to everything that can happen to the car, with which we all identify.

What do we do about all this? I submit that there is a mechanism for dealing with irresponsible broadcasting, and that is the heart and soul of the 1934 American Communications Act. I presume there is something comparable in the Canadian Broadcasting Act and other laws. American laws hold that a television licensee must serve the public interest,

convenience, and necessity. That sounds good, but the phrase is hard to define and so no station in the United States has ever lost its licence precisely for failing to serve the public interest. But if you went down the program schedule of any station in America—the program schedule of a station being made up of what it carries off the network and what it buys from syndication or produces itself—I think you would find that in almost every vital period of the day the broadcaster was serving his own economic interest before the public interest.

Only one licence in America need be taken away for disservice to the public through overindulgence in violent programming, and the system would be reformed overnight.

### **Ralph Ellis**

Ralph Ellis, president of Ralph C. Ellis Enterprises Ltd., has had extensive experience in television and film production. His film career began in 1946 when he joined the National Film Board in Halifax. Eight years later, he launched a private film distribution company, Freemantle of Canada Ltd. Since then he has helped develop several production companies including Keg Productions and Manitou Productions. Mr. Ellis is a motion picture pioneer, has been executive producer of several successful television series, including "Adventures in Rainbow Country," "Audubon Wildlife Theatre," and the series of specials, "To the Wild Country."

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In my work, I have found an interesting thing in relation to the subject of this symposium. I found that the audience for nature films, which is primarily a family audience, reacts very badly to sequences in which animals are shot. There is a certain amount of scientific evidence to back this up. For instance, the CBC has a very special rating service which measures not just the number of people who are watching a given program, but how much they are actually enjoying what they are seeing. I remember one episode of "Audubon Wildlife Theatre" in which an elk herd in the western part of the United States had exceeded its forage potential. There were no predators to keep the elk in line, there were too many of them, so the herd had to be culled. We showed a sequence of an elk being shot, and when we got the enjoyment index on that particular show, where we normally were rated in the high eighties, this episode was substantially less.

I'm here today as president of Keg Productions and of Ralph C. Ellis Enterprises. I can't say that I represent the Canadian private production industry specifically, although I believe that it would second the suggestions that I'm going to make here this morning.



Before getting into the larger question of producing Canadian television programs without violence, let's look at some of the economic factors in producing and distributing Canadian programs.

In examining the production and distribution of programs for television, the first factor to consider is that of budgeting and marketing. The world television market is made up of the United States, which represents approximately 50% of the income possible to the producer, and the rest of the world, which represents the other 50%. This latter half of the world market obviously is the most costly sector in which to sell programs, because of the many language requirements, the distances to be covered, and so on. Because the United States can produce television programs and recover their cost in their own country, they have become dominant in the world of television production and distribution; their sale of TV series abroad is really—and I hope this is not too harsh a term—a form of dumping. They attempt to get the highest price possible. But, if they get \$4000 per half-hour program out of English Canada, and \$2000 out of French Canada, these sums, while small in relation to the original cost of the program, represent clear profit. Canada represents substantially less than 10% of the world television market, but to produce a television program here costs somewhat less than in the United States. On a profit and loss basis, no network or advertiser could justify the cost of producing a full series of television shows for the Canadian market only. Canadian networks such as the CBC regularly produce very costly programs as part of their mandate, but this is not possible for unsubsidized companies in the private enterprise sector of Canada.

The cost of producing a half-hour dramatic series in Canada in English or French ranges upwards from a minimum of \$2000 a minute. A 30-minute show would cost approximately \$60,000. Many dramatic programs exceed this cost, but few could be completed for less. This makes an investment of approximately \$1.5 million for a dramatic film program of 26 half-hours which, when repeated once, makes a 52-week schedule. The cost of dubbing a series into English or French would be approximately \$2000 per half-hour. These costs are approximate, depending on the number of characters required. It might be more, but certainly wouldn't be much less. Costs for hour programs are roughly double the cost of a half-hour, so your dubbing costs for an hour dramatic show would be in the area of \$4000. Other programs of a documentary character, such as wildlife programs, travel shows, etc., cost much less to produce and, in some cases, can be fully paid for in the Canadian television market. It is obvious, therefore, that for private production companies the only way to recover the cost of a series is through sales in Canada and the world television market. Over the years, a number of Canadian series of a

dramatic and non-dramatic character produced by the private sector have been sold widely around the world. Some examples are "RCMP," "Forest Rangers," "Adventures in Rainbow Country," "Audubon Wildlife Theatre," "Untamed World," "Robinson Crusoe," and "Witness to Yesterday." Almost all of these were also available as dubbed series in French Canada. Also, almost all were made possible only through the support of and sometimes coproduction arrangements with a Canadian television network.

The limiting factor to the stimulation of an active private program production industry outside existing networks and stations is the lack of cooperation between private producers and television networks. Although series have been produced in the past through such cooperation, it is difficult for TV networks and stations to allocate funds for any consistent flow of production without a related cutback in their own operations. In dramatic series production, it usually takes coproduction arrangements between two or more countries to cover the cost of a series of programs. It is understandable that networks and major TV stations are reluctant at times to gamble on a high-risk, expensive dramatic film series when the same money invested in a videotape series of another sort, using their own facilities, is usually more immediately profitable. ✓

One way out of the problem could be a special government subsidy for production of dramatic TV series: \$2 from government, \$1 from the network, and \$1 from the private producer—that is, a 50% subsidy from a government source. Using Canadian talent and private production companies as a condition of the subsidy, such a plan could assist the development of a healthy Canadian production industry producing programs on both film and videotape. It would also allow a basic supply of programming free from the excessive violence being questioned at this symposium. Without such a subsidy, there is little hope that private producers and networks will make other than what will sell in the United States—dramatic series with an amount of conflict and violence equivalent to their own. —

As a first priority in the area of children's programming, Canada could take the lead in special non-violent films for television. It has already been shown that film series produced in Canada with a non-violent approach are very popular here and abroad. As an example, "Adventures in Rainbow Country," which was number one in its time period on CBC when it was originally played, is now sold in 40 countries and in six languages. For example, the German-dubbed version, run at seven o'clock on a Tuesday evening had in excess of 18 million viewers, which is very high for that territory. "Rainbow Country," designed to be non-violent, was

produced as a coproduction with the CBC and with other partners. It was done, incidentally, under the CBC rules and regulations; they were not a problem when we were producing the show.

We could perhaps emulate the success of the films produced in England under the auspices of the Children's Film Foundation, a non-profit film industry subsidized group which, after much research, has commissioned many one-hour children's feature films each year for theatrical and television use. Each Children's Film Foundation production aims for a script which has excitement, action, tension, but a clearcut delineation of the heroes and the villains, and a lack of violence. The films are very popular with their intended audience, and this type of film would be a natural to produce in Canada. We have excellent locations from coast to coast for exciting adventure films. Since these films could be shown in theatres as well as on TV, they could be joint projects of private producers with networks or stations, with the Canadian Film Development Corporation offering assistance on the 50% basis I mentioned before.

Investing money to foster Canadian production should be assisted as much as possible by promoting sales in countries other than the United States. An excellent market exists in the United Kingdom for Canadian programs which, by the way, today still remain available to stations and networks and qualify as 100% British content. It is my opinion that an even greater market would open if some Canadian content consideration were to be given British television programs and films in Canada. This used to be the case, but preferential treatment was dropped when new Canadian regulations were adopted a few years ago.

To summarize, we can produce in Canada television programs without excessive violence. We can only accomplish this if we are not totally dependent on the United States market and if we receive some sort of government subsidy. We can set an example for the world if we really feel Canada should spend money on its cultural development in English and French television programming of a non-violent but perfectly acceptable character.

### **Raymond David**

Ancien critique dramatique, autrefois réalisateur à la radio de Radio-Canada puis directeur-adjoint à la télévision de Radio-Canada, M. Raymond David est actuellement vice-président et directeur général de la radiodiffusion française de la Société Radio-Canada. M. David a tenté de cerner les principales raisons qui sont à la base de la particularité de la programmation française au Canada. Il a aussi soulevé les problèmes auxquels la télévision francophone doit faire face. L'allocation de M. David, présentée sans texte préparé à l'avance, visait aussi à informer les participants des réalisations de la



télévision canadienne française. Les connaissances de ces derniers variant selon les individus, la présentation a tenté de toucher à tous les aspects de la programmation.

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Le Canada français est à bien des égards fort différent du Canada anglais, tout comme il l'est des Etats-Unis. Par conséquent, notre grille horaire présente un aspect fort différent de celle des stations canadiennes anglaises et des stations américaines.

Lorsque la télévision canadienne a vu le jour en 1952, la Société Radio-Canada avait décidé de créer, à Montréal, une station bilingue. Cette formule ne fut retenue que pour quelque six mois sous la pression des vives protestations qui s'élevèrent des deux communautés linguistiques. La Société a alors décidé de mettre en place deux stations à Montréal: CBFT et CBMT. Mais, de ce fait, nous nous sommes retrouvés dans une impasse car nous ne pouvions nous alimenter nulle part en émissions. Il fallait tout produire. A cette époque, les télévisions francophones d'Europe en étaient tout comme nous à leurs premiers pas.

L'industrie du doublage n'existait pas encore, le besoin ne s'étant pas jusqu'alors manifesté. Par conséquent, il a fallu tout créer nous-mêmes. Ainsi, pour vous citer un exemple: la télévision française de Radio-Canada devait allouer 25% de son budget pour présenter 23 heures d'émissions jeunesse conçues électroniquement. De la même façon, il fallut se lancer dans la production et la réalisation d'émissions de divertissement. C'est ainsi que naquirent les téléromans. Heureusement, dès le début, nous avons pu compter sur des écrivains qui, tout en étant populaires, produisaient des oeuvres de grande qualité. Je pense à Roger Lemelin pour "Les Plouffe", à Madame Guévremont pour "Le Survenant", à Guy Dufresne pour "Cap-aux-Sorciers", à André Giroux pour "14, rue de Galais". Nous avons donc débuté avec huit séries hebdomadaires de téléromans et cette tradition s'est toujours maintenue avec des succès inégaux. Il faut toutefois avouer que dans toute entreprise de ce genre on se lance dans l'aléatoire; ce que nous croyons bon à priori peut parfois ne pas l'être. Cependant, nous pouvons dire que, dans l'ensemble, les téléromans ont formé la charnière de notre programmation. Nous avons d'abord misé sur la popularité. Le mot d'ordre de Radio-Canada a été de "faire une télévision populaire".

D'ailleurs, le gros de notre budget a été attribué aux téléromans, ainsi qu'aux émissions de variétés. A cette époque, la chaîne française de Radio-Canada opposait à "Ed Sullivan", l'émission "Music Hall" alors animée par Michelle Tisseyre. Cette émission avait remporté un tel succès qu'elle s'était méritée la première place des cotes d'écoute à

Montréal supplantant ainsi "Ed Sullivan", ce qui, il va sans dire, nous avait énormément réjoui. Outre les émissions de variétés, il y eut également à cette époque une floraison de chanteurs populaires qui exprimaient parfaitement l'âme québécoise. Ce fut tout d'abord Félix Leclerc suivi de Gilles Vigneault, de Jean-Pierre Ferland, et plus récemment de Robert Charlebois. Ceci, à mon avis, a permis de développer, de consolider et de raffermir la personnalité de notre télévision.

Il est vrai qu'au début la grille horaire des émissions était moins imposante, les émissions débutant à 16h00. Aujourd'hui, notre programmation commence à 9h15, ce qui signifie que nous sommes en ondes pendant environ le même nombre d'heures que le sont les réseaux CTV, CBC, ou TVA. Naturellement, nous avons dû nous procurer du matériel à l'extérieur. Mais nous avons cependant réussi à diversifier nos sources d'approvisionnement. D'abord, nous avons fondé une communauté des télévisions francophones regroupant la France, la Belgique et la Suisse avec qui nous co-produisons et avec qui nous échangeons certains de nos téléromans; ainsi "Quelle Famille" a passé sur les ondes de l'ORTF; "La Petite Semaine", un nouveau téléroman, a été acheté par la Belgique. De plus, nous participons activement à des coproductions avec Pathé-Cinéma, l'ORTF, la Belgique; par exemple, "Jos Gaillard", série populaire produite par la France, comprend des épisodes tournés au Québec; on exige à cet effet que des comédiens canadiens fassent partie de la distribution, dans un certain nombre d'épisodes, et qu'on leur attribue un premier ou un deuxième rôle. Dans un autre domaine, on a fait une opérette en Belgique dont la chanteuse principale était Lise Lasalle, une Canadienne.

La télévision française de Radio-Canada a actuellement, pour l'ensemble de son horaire, une teneur canadienne de 68%; environ 12% nous proviennent des Etats-Unis, 10%, à peu près, des pays francophones et le reste d'autres pays.

Une des catégories les plus importantes de la programmation est celle du cinéma. En plus de présenter du cinéma étranger (qu'il soit italien, tchèque, allemand ou polonais), nous avons énormément encouragé l'essor du cinéma canadien, en particulier celui du cinéma québécois; signalons qu'au moins 100 films québécois ont été à l'affiche de Radio-Canada. De plus, nous mettons en ondes cette année une série documentaire intitulée "Cinéma canadien" qui est, en quelque sorte, une rétrospective de l'activité cinématographique au Canada.

Lorsque nous parlons de la télévision francophone, il importe de souligner

l'importance qu'ont eue la langue et la culture française sur son orientation. Il faut aussi dire que la télévision française ne rencontre pas les mêmes difficultés de concurrence qu'à la télévision anglaise face à nos voisins américains. Au fond, le marché français est partagé entre le réseau privé de langue française, TVA, et le réseau public de Radio-Canada. Il n'y a presque aucun empiètement de la part des stations de langue anglaise.

D'après les sondages, il y a actuellement à Montréal 8% de l'auditoire qui regardent les canaux américains. Mais, comme vous le savez, 35% de la population de la région de Montréal est anglophone. Ce qui signifie que, même si parmi ce 8% il y a 2% ou 3% de Canadiens français, nous pouvons considérer notre auditoire comme étant un auditoire fidèle. Il est en même temps assez également réparti entre les deux réseaux.

La télévision française de Radio-Canada a beaucoup misé sur le populaire, de sorte qu'un secteur aussi important que celui de l'information a été sensiblement négligé. On envoyait énormément le réseau anglais qui faisait, et continue d'ailleurs à le faire, des réalisations remarquables en ce domaine. Depuis ce temps, Radio-Canada a modifié progressivement sa répartition budgétaire et, depuis, nos émissions d'information connaissent un bon succès. Qui n'a pas entendu parler du "60" qui l'an dernier a rejoint un million et demi de téléspectateurs?

Si, d'une part, la télévision est à prédominance canadienne, il faut, d'autre part, ajouter que nous présentons également des émissions de sources américaines ou anglaises. Cette année, notre horaire d'automne comprend aux heures de pointe quatre séries américaines: "Walt Disney", "Doctor Welby", "Flintstones", de même qu'une sélection d'histoires policières américaines. Nous avons décidé de mettre à l'affiche une émission sur trois de séries telles que "Banacek", "Madigan", "Wednesday Night Mystery Movie". Ces séries sont évidemment doublées à Montréal, car nous avons beaucoup insisté pour que le doublage y soit fait dans les cas où nous sommes les premiers preneurs. Il en va de même pour la France ou la Belgique, qui, lorsqu'ils sont les premiers preneurs, font effectuer le doublage dans leurs pays respectifs. De ce fait, l'industrie du doublage a permis de créer un nouveau débouché pour les comédiens et les auteurs canadiens français.

Evidemment, nous devons nous aussi faire face à certains problèmes. Il y a toujours la question d'argent qui, à mon avis, est un grave problème. Il est aussi un fait indéniable: nous desservons une petite population. Le Canada français n'a pas un réservoir vaste comme il s'en trouve aux



Etats-Unis, en France, en Angleterre ou au Canada anglais. Par conséquent, l'horaire est alimenté à 95% environ par Montréal, ce qui nous vaut les mêmes remarques et critiques que celles qui sont adressées à Toronto.

Cependant, nos grands problèmes se rattachent à la recherche des auteurs et à celle de l'argent. La télévision coûte de plus en plus cher. Nos téléromans et nos télé-théâtres sont produits électroniquement. Quant au film, il se fait surtout dans le domaine de l'information. Compte tenu de nos budgets, la production de séries filmées est actuellement tout simplement inabordable. Ainsi, quand le problème de la violence se pose, il me semble qu'il ne se pose pas avec la même acuité, ni au même niveau pour notre auditoire.

Bien sûr, les auditeurs protestent de la violence, mais ces protestations portent autant sur le "biaisage" politique que sur les exagérations en matière de sexualité ou sur la programmation de mauvais goût. En fait, cela ne semble pas être pour notre auditoire un problème majeur.

La violence ne semble pas être un problème majeur d'autant plus que, à l'heure actuelle, nos émissions jeunesse connaissent un grand succès et nous en sommes assez fiers. Les personnages sont devenus des héros pour la jeunesse canadienne française. Je pense à "Bobino", à toute la série de "La Boîte à Surprise", à "Sol et Gobelet", au "Major Plum-Pudding", au "Pirate Maboule" et à tous les personnages bien connus des enfants. Le réseau TVA a également obtenu ce genre de succès populaire. Nos émissions canadiennes sont le reflet du milieu. En ce sens, nous avons tenté de varier le plus possible les divers lieux et situations; situations folkloriques, pourrait-on dire, avec les "Belles Histoires"; de comédie avec "Moi et l'Autre"; de vie des quartiers défavorisés avec "Rue des Pignons". Cette variété des lieux dramatiques permet de refléter, non pas d'une façon parfaite mais du moins en partie, les différents milieux et, ainsi, les gens qui appartiennent à ces divers milieux peuvent, à travers les émissions, s'identifier à un type de personnage ou se reconnaître et cela les aide à vivre. Cela a été, à mon avis, un élément important de ce qu'on a appelé la "révolution tranquille" au Canada français. Donc, nous devons faire face à un problème de ressources intellectuelles et créatrices qui demeure un grand problème parce que nous produisons trop. Nous sommes dans l'incapacité de produire moins, nous sommes amenés à produire toujours plus. Cela provient du fait que les Canadiens français réclament un service public d'importance égale à celui des Canadiens anglais et que, de leur côté, les Canadiens anglais affirment que s'ils n'arrivent pas à produire autant que les Américains,

ceux-ci les étoufferont. Si nous comparons le Canada, avec une population de 22 millions, et la province de Québec aux pays ayant une population analogue, nous constatons que nous produisons beaucoup plus que la Tchécoslovaquie, la Pologne, les pays scandinaves, etc.

Je crois vous avoir donné un portrait assez fidèle de ce que nous tentons de faire. Bien sûr, il y a des domaines qui exigeraient une plus grande attention, qui demanderaient qu'on les développe, comme celui du théâtre. Il est regrettable qu'on ne puisse présenter autant de pièces de théâtre qu'on aurait voulu et, de ce point de vue là, c'est même déplorable aussi bien du côté anglais que du côté français. Si nous ne nous lançons pas dans la production massive de télé-théâtres, c'est bien en raison de leur coût. Les télé-théâtres nous coûtent quatre fois plus cher qu'ils ne nous en coûtaient autrefois. Et quelqu'un nous disait qu'on achetait maintenant les séries américaines à deux mille dollars. Ces dernières sont aujourd'hui vendues à quatre et cinq mille dollars la demi-heure. Tout est donc une question d'argent. Tandis que nos budgets montent l'escalier, nos coûts prennent l'ascenseur. Nous comptons toutefois maintenir la qualité de notre service de télévision. A vrai dire, nous n'avons pas le choix. Le Parlement nous a confié un mandat que nous devons remplir.

## **Discussion from the floor**

Discussion following the panel centered on the feasibility and desirability of various options Canadians had for controlling scenes of televised violence.

James McGrath, Member of Parliament for Saint John's East, was particularly interested in finding out if efforts were being made by Canadian broadcasters to develop an effective industry code. He was at a loss to understand how the CBC could profess to have a code while at the same time continuing to carry programs, such as "Cannon," that fit into the category of violent programs: "An industry code would be preferable to regulations, but I believe very strongly, as one who is very much interested in this subject as a legislator, that if there is not an industry code, then there will ultimately have to be a code imposed by Parliament."

Ron Mitchell, vice-chairman for the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, replied that the CAB had decided at its annual meeting in May 1975 to authorize a very close review of the violence situation. The board of directors would consider possible further steps after examining the findings of the review in September: "I should note that in the material the CRTC distributed here, the figure of 3% was given for the violence content

in Canadian programming. I think that indicates, as many other things that Canadian broadcasters do, that we have a sense of responsibility."

The president of CTV, Murray Chercover, noted there are very few countries which do not legislate regulations for program content. Mr. Chercover went on to point out that most broadcasting organizations have some form of code or self-examination. From time to time, these codes are violated by creative persons involved in programming but he added, "I'm delighted to say we're flexible enough to provide for that."

Mr. Chercover suggested any effort at government control would surely raise questions about the merit of other federal broadcasting policies: "How can we even talk in real terms about limits, or rules, limiting or as Mr. McGraw suggests, legislating controls on Canadian broadcasting, when the same legislature demanded that there be no limitation on access to foreign signals for our viewers?"

Dr. Ralph Dent, a professor at the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto, expressed irritation with the suggestion made throughout the symposium that a child can learn violence from television: "Television teaches him about violence. It does not teach him to be violent. What teaches him to be violent is the successful use of violence. If we're really concerned about this, we should be concentrating on the ways in which we do, in fact, reinforce violence in our society." He objected very strongly to suggestions of either industry or government regulation: "I think it's my responsibility as a member of the public to let the media know what I don't like. I want the right to let you know that when I turn off the set I'm not going to watch your program anymore. I might do it for the same reason that the CRTC would do it, but I cannot see the Commission wielding that sort of power over something that I have a right to see or not to see myself."

Ken Sobol considered Dr. Dent's attitudes unrealistic and confused: "Of course, any kid can distinguish between a cartoon fantasy and his own actions. But what he sees is what Pauline Kael has called the absence of social consequences of the acts. . . . Canada and the United States are the only countries in the world that allow children essentially free choice of what they are going to see. If you allow the choice between a comic book and 'literature', certainly most children are going to choose the comic book. You pay full homage to free choice, but look at what you end up with."

Ken Marchant, director of research for the LaMarsh Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry, suggested that the symposium



really hadn't confronted the fact that most of the violent programming originates in the United States and not in Canada: "It's in our environment," he said, "but it's not something we can readily filter out or control."

Ehor Boyanowski, a professor of psychology at Simon Fraser University, responded that Canadians should not be too quick to assume that there is no violent content in their own entertainment programming: "The most pervasive three-hour children's program, produced largely in this country, has been demonstrated to teach acts of mayhem, to reinforce them, to socialize a child to behave in an extremely aggressive manner. Yet NHL hockey is somehow regarded as beyond control. . . . It is totally Canadian programming, condoned by the CRTC, by the CBC, by CTV, and by society."

Jean Campbell, director of early and basic education for the Alberta Educational Communications Authority, pointed out that while the CBC code may be stringently applied to domestic production and design techniques, it was less effective concerning foreign acquisitions. She suggested the same criteria should apply to both domestic and foreign programs shown on Canadian networks.

Returning to a suggestion raised by Ralph Ellis in his panel presentation, Garth Jowett wondered why Canadian broadcasters concerned with excessive violence have not considered importing more of the interesting, high-quality British dramatic productions.

Les Brown speculated that if Canadian broadcasters were to exercise greater selectivity in their choice of imported programs, the American industry might very well be forced to produce fewer violent programs. He noted that the money paid by the American networks for most dramatic series often barely meets the production expenses. Any real profit is derived from foreign sales and eventual daytime syndication. The decision of several American stations to remove violent programs from the six-to-eight o'clock time slot has already resulted in a significant loss of revenue for several series. "Mannix," for example, had a very poor reception on the syndication market, while "Cannon" was withdrawn from sale altogether. If the networks "can't depend on getting the kinds of money for their programs that they used to get from Canada or Mexico or Australia, then they are going to be in serious trouble."

Dr. Liebert agreed that selectivity would provide Canadians with more power to affect the nature of American programming than most people at the symposium would suspect: "If there were a non-U.S. market for other kinds of programming, you would be putting the crunch on violent

programs and encouraging other types. Canada has a great deal of force through the dollar."

## **CRTC background paper: The economic realities of Canadian television production**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Economic factors play an important role in any consideration of the amount and the nature of so-called violent programming which appears on Canadian television screens. The relative size of the Canadian and American markets, the nature of program importation and coproduction undertakings, and the competition between Canadian networks and those of the United States in cabled and border areas, all have an effect on the mix of what Canadians actually view, as well as on what types of programs are produced here. For example, the Canadian commercial broadcaster is influenced in his purchasing and scheduling decisions by the overall merchandising strategies of the American broadcasters and program production companies with which he sometimes competes, and which he sometimes uses as a program supplier.

The dramatic difference in market size—and thus in the potential revenue—versus production costs, make the "produce or purchase" option economically important for Canadian broadcasters. An hour-long U.S. action-adventure film series generally recoups its production costs through its U.S. network sale. Such series as "Mannix," "Cannon," and "Kojak" are bought by the American networks for \$250,000 per episode, while a Canadian network (and any other foreign purchaser) can purchase the series for as little as \$5000.

Further, because of the size of its domestic market, an American network can ask upwards of \$100,000 per minute for advertising messages, guaranteeing exposure to an average of 20 million viewers in prime time. Affiliate fees and distribution costs for a given network, when added to the purchase and production costs, yield a far lower margin in both percentage and real dollar terms in Canada.

Such economic realities mean that programming purchased outside Canada in effect subsidizes the production of domestic programming for a Canadian commercial network. Production costs in Canada, while not as high as those in the United States, are still sufficient to force substantial purchases from U.S. sources when a network plans for its own programming. An examination of what the CTV television network produces domestically illustrates this quite clearly: the 1974 fall schedule in prime

time included four half-hour music shows, two current affairs series, one game show, and three drama series. Two of the latter were coproductions, meaning that CTV paid only a part of the actual production costs (estimated in these cases at about \$70,000 per half-hour episode each). The other drama series was a studio, videotaped situation comedy produced at about half the cost of the other two filmed series. The average half-hour program costs for the other series were about \$15,000 and \$20,000.

So far, North American audiences have shown a preference in prime time for series drama over other forms of television. As a result, the American networks purchase very few music/variety series. They specialize in the action-adventure and situation comedy forms, the former in one-hour formats, the latter in half-hour productions. Canadian (and British and European) audiences still enjoy music programs, perhaps because a wide range of them are offered on their own networks. Indeed, music and current affairs programs have become standard and established forms of Canadian (and European) television production. Moreover, they are economical forms of television in terms of both facilities and talent.

The network programmer may argue that to produce purely Canadian action-adventure programming, while an admirable goal, would be a misuse of already scarce programming dollars. Canadian networks can choose such programming, already proven, from either the United States or Britain. Coproduction of action-adventure series may sometimes be considered since it lessens the capital investment needed by the Canadian network, and the CTV television network had done so with such undertakings as "Police Surgeon" and "Swiss Family Robinson."

To provide alternative yet complementary types of Canadian drama, the commercial networks in both English and French Canada have tended to opt for the situation comedy/téléromans/quasi-soap opera videotape drama. Producers feel that this is an area in which Canadians can effectively compete, where costs are considerably lower, and where domestic-situation themes may be better exploited. Without external subsidies of some form or other, only the CBC can afford to produce the more complex and challenging hour-long action-adventure film formats similar to those made in the U.S. and Britain.

## BROADCASTING AND CANADIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Much has been written about the size and geographic distribution of the Canadian market, and the difficulties it poses for all forms of economic development. In broadcasting, these factors are major considerations in



the development of Canadian program production. In television particularly, economies of scale are difficult to realize, and so the Canadian program production industry has been put in a somewhat disadvantaged position. In practice, revenues are limited by the number of potential viewers, about 21 million in Canada—split on a four to one ratio by language—relative to a potential audience in the United States of 203 million.

The quality of a program in any given format is determined to a considerable extent by expenditure on production; on one level, expense can serve as a very coarse measure of quality. If the revenue available, as defined by the size of market, is less than that required by a threshold level of programming resources (allowing for the cost of the distribution system and a suitable level of profit), then there is virtually no incentive for domestic production in commercial terms. Production activity will be possible only if there are subsidies from some other sources or if the market can be substantially enlarged. Market size and program distribution, the constraints on economy of scale, explain why, to an extent, much Canadian (and European) produced television programming differs in style from that available from U.S. sources; a heavy concentration on filmed drama in the U.S. is a case in point.

Advertiser-supported television in Canada has been augmented in the public sector by other sources of revenue, specifically by federal and, latterly, by provincial funding. Such funding outweighs revenues from commercial sources in television. Another equally important but less obvious kind of subsidy occurs as a result of scheduling and advertising rate structures which allow for profits from foreign programs, particularly in prime time, to be applied to support scheduling and producing Canadian programs. Such a relationship is an important economic aspect of the present domestic system and it can be demonstrated that were this profit structure not available, then economic constraints would further limit the scale of Canadian production to far below its present level.

Expansion of the Canadian television market through export sales does not yet represent a major source of revenues to the Canadian broadcasting system. On the whole, when programs produced in Canada are exported it is usually because they have been coproduced with foreign and Canadian capital. Naturally, the returns from foreign sales are proportional only to the capital invested by Canadians. With such coproduction, only a fraction (about one-quarter) of the production funds need be supplied by Canadian producers, but a specific disadvantage of this arrangement is that unless sufficient program sales in the United States (as the largest potential market) are guaranteed, there is little hope of

recovering remaining costs for the non-Canadian partner. For example, because of recent programming decisions made in the United States, two Canadian drama coproductions have been discontinued. A second disadvantage is that the content and format of coproductions are defined by the needs of the principal market, in this case the U.S.

## BASIC ECONOMICS OF CANADIAN TELEVISION SCHEDULING

The economic constraints on the Canadian broadcasting industry become most obvious through an analysis of the prime time schedule of the two major English television networks, the public CBC and private CTV. Although the figures used are approximations, this demonstration nonetheless provides an adequate model for discussion.

Using the program schedule from the 1974-75 season, revenues for each hour or half-hour segment are estimated using published advertising rates that assume that 80% of the maximum allowable commercial minutes per hour are sold.\* Actual revenues are influenced by many factors such as special discounts and "packages" which encourage advertisers to buy spots in both American and Canadian programming. The following Canadian program production costs therefore are only estimates.

The costs of production in the United States of prime time major network programs are more expensive because the scale of the American market provides far more advertising revenue, which in turn allows a greater allocation of revenue to program production and talent costs.

Typically, and fairly consistently, American programs of the kind imported into Canada run \$125,000 per half-hour to produce.† It is not this production cost which is relevant to the scheduling decisions of Canadian networks; it is the purchase price, in the order of \$2000 per half-hour, since NBC, CBS, or ABC prices already cover amortized production costs in the American market. Clearly, if audiences, and therefore revenues, for Canadian series and the American imports were the same, there would be

\*Revenue estimates are calculated from *Canadian Advertising Rates and Data*, January 1975. For CTV, the 30-second rate for 52 weeks is used, while for CBC, the one-minute rate for 43 stations is used (from 10:00 p.m. to 11 p.m. when CBC shows public affairs, it is assumed that only two minutes per half-hour are sold). Hockey has been excluded since it is sponsored on a different basis.

†What the American networks pay to independent production companies for these programs is published annually. *Broadcasting*, 12 May 1975, pp. 22-23, is the basis for these cost estimates. The actual total expenditures on production per episode is probably slightly higher. Once the networks' rights to the programs expire (generally after two runs) there is a possibility for residual income to the producers from other forms of distribution—syndication off-network, foreign sales, etc. Such additional sales make it possible for producers to absorb certain cost overruns not met by the U.S. network's policy of paying a fixed price, per half-hour, regardless of actual production cost.

a drastic difference in the profit margin per hour after the costs of purchase or production have been subtracted from revenue. (Audiences are lower on average for Canadian programs, and this phenomenon is discussed separately.) American programming dominates in Canada because it is simply a superior business proposition.

Looking at the prime time schedule model of January 1975 for CTV (Table 4, below), the average margin per half-hour of Canadian programming can be estimated at \$55, while that for foreign programming is \$21,000 per half hour. This estimate excludes the two coproductions, "Swiss Family Robinson" and "Police Surgeon," since only one-quarter of the total production cost in each case was supplied by CTV. However, if these two programs were produced without the benefit of coproduction financing, the average margin would have fallen so sharply that there would have been a loss of \$8860 per half-hour. Applying this same calculation to the CBC English prime time schedule, the average loss on Canadian programs is \$2050 per half-hour, with a profit of \$20,600 per half-hour for foreign programs. Given these economic forces as they apply to public broadcasting, the CBC's current parliamentary grant of \$297,900,149 must far exceed its \$59,936,000 net advertising revenue from television.\*

TABLE 1  
CANADIAN PRIME-TIME PROGRAM PRODUCTION COSTS†

Program type	Cost/half-hour
Variety	\$15,000
Music anthology	\$20,000
Drama — tape	\$30,000
— film	\$65,000
Current affairs	\$15,000
Documentary	\$20,000
Game	\$ 8,500

†There is often a difference between the production cost and the price paid by a network for a program. This difference may be absorbed by the affiliate as part of its "membership" in the network, as is the case with CTV. Even U.S. production companies are claiming their network sales price is not recovering their production costs, making syndication and foreign sales even more important to their existence. (See "Producers say crunch hurts in their costs network's pay," *Broadcasting*, 21 July 1975, p.22.)

\*CBC *Annual Report*, 1974-75 (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1975), p. 70. Net television advertising revenue is gross advertising revenue minus commissions to agencies and networks.



It is an inescapable conclusion that the high revenues and low costs of imported programs make the present level and quality of Canadian-produced programming possible: the profit margins available from Canadian productions are insufficient to support them without the revenue available from foreign programs.\* This is not to say that Canadian programming will always be an uneconomic proposition. It is simply a statement of the existing situation.

The question of what constitutes an adequate profit margin on an hour of prime time programming is not discussed here, and is beyond the scope of this paper. But this margin must allow not only for distribution, selling, administration, and depreciation costs, but an adequate rate of return on investment. It should also be noted that nearly all Canadian programs are produced by the networks themselves or by their affiliates. Therefore, the present U.S. situation based on private independent producers cannot be compared at this time to the Canadian broadcasting industry.

## THE DEMAND FOR PROGRAMS

Allocating advertising rates and program expenditures is, in a commercial television model, a function of the audience level. Canadian programs, especially in prime time, often do not achieve the viewership or ratings (percentage of total audience) of foreign programs. According to a BBM market survey (Fall 1974, Toronto), only five of the top 20 programs were Canadian. Of these, two were news and one was NHL hockey. Only the latter was among the top ten programs in fourth position (see Table 2).

Advertising rates of necessity reflect this situation. In the CTV prime-time rate structure, the advertising rate on Canadian programming for a single 30-second spot is 22% less than the equivalent rate for non-Canadian programs.† Canadian programming is discounted even more in practice because an additional discount applies on a graduated scale when up to 52 30-second spots are purchased. For non-Canadian programs the 52-week rate is 22% less than the one-week rate, while for Canadian programming, the equivalent discount is 30%. As an incentive to buy spots during Canadian programs, there is a package discount for combinations of spots bought on both Canadian and non-Canadian programs.

\*This is not the case for the major private French-language station in Quebec. It uses few imported series and achieves high viewership and adequate profitability with its own relatively low-cost production. In this case its style and program models are not based on the U.S., but reflect the different view of television held in French-speaking Quebec, and Europe as a whole.

†CTV Rate Card for January 1975.

TABLE 2  
TOP 20 PROGRAMS IN TORONTO,  
(ADULTS 18 AND OVER)\*

Program	Rating	Violent, Non-violent, Sports, News†	Country of origin	Actual audience
Movie ("Midnight Cowboy")	20	V-2	US	397,422
All in the Family	18	NV	US	357,679
M.A.S.H.	18	NV	US	357,679
NHL Hockey	17	Sports	C	337,808
Rhoda (WBEN-TV)	14	NV	US	278,195
Ironside	13	V-1	US	258,311
Harry-O	13	V-1	US	258,311
Rhoda (CBLT)	12	NV	US	238,441
Mary Tyler Moore	12	NV	US	238,441
Movie ("New Centurions")	12	V-2	US	238,441
Kojac	12	V-1	US	238,441
Collaborators	11	V-2	C	218,571
World Beat (Monday)	11	News	C	218,571
Cannon	10	V-1	US	198,010
Ceilidh	10	NV	C	198,701
Man About the House	10	NV	B	198,701
Rockford Files	10	V-1	US	198,701
Walt Disney	10	NV	US	198,701
World Beat (Wednesday)	10	News	C	198,701
Streets of San Francisco	9	V-1	US	178,839
Totals		9 violent	14 US	
		8 non-violent	5 Canadian	
		1 sport	1 British	
		2 news		

\*BBM, Fall 1974.

†For an explanation of methodology used in this coding, see symposium paper, "Public preference, production source and amount of violence and non-violent programming in selected Canadian markets," CRTC background paper (see Appendix 5).

V-1: Coded violent with reference to compiled list.

V-2: Coded violent with reference to *TV Guide* synopsis.

NV: Non-violent.

If the rate structure is examined from the point of view of the advertiser, the system rationalizes the cost per thousand viewers between Canadian and foreign programs. Taking the CTV schedule for Fall 1974 and comparing actual audiences as reported by the BBM Bureau of Measurement with the appropriate advertising rates for each program, the cost per thousand viewers on Canadian programs is \$1.34, while on foreign programs (all are American in this sample), the cost is \$1.32. The lower

audiences for Canadian programs requires an advertising rate differential to equalize the cost of buying viewers.\*

## VIOLENCE IN AN ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

What can be said about the relationship between economic variables and the production and viewing of programs with violence as a key element? The first point to be made is that the supply of violent programming is predominantly in United States imports. A division of all half-hour program segments shown in Toronto between country of origin and between violent, non-violent, sports, and news, has demonstrated that from all sources, 34% of programming is violent, and largest proportion of programming (68%) is American in origin. Forty-seven percent of American imported programming is violent, while only 3% of Canadian programming is violent (see Table 5). Violent programs are of the action-adventure film drama type, usually an "expensive" class of program. Moreover, in the U.S. it appears that there is a relationship between production cost and violence: violent programs are among the most costly and technically complex forms of TV production. Generally speaking, drama on television in the U.S. has often been directed toward violent-crime action, and this has been a conscious programming decision.† To a Canadian broadcaster these series are significantly less expensive than domestic production.

Violent programs are popular, but if the range of drama forms were broadened to include more choice, as in the special circumstances of the French-speaking market in Quebec, violence would almost certainly not rate as highly as it now does.

## CONCLUSION

It can be demonstrated that the Canadian broadcasting system has become economically dependent on foreign-produced programming to balance the high cost requirements of domestic program production. The Canadian television production industry tends to create programming which is considerably different in both style and content from the overall offerings of the three U.S. networks. Such programming is seldom violent.

\*To compute cost per thousand, the 30-second rate for 52 weeks was used.

†There is a structural feature of commercial television which is not discussed here and which relates to the reasons why the diet of prime time programming on the three American networks is dominated by a few program types (crime drama being the case in point), and therefore why the choice of American drama imports is limited. An understanding of this phenomenon requires a discussion of whether the economic incentives inherent in competition for advertising between networks favors diversification or duplication of programming. A rigorous analysis is complex, but a clear discussion of research in the area can be found in B.M. Owen, J.H. Beebe, and W.G. Manning Jr., *Television Economics* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1972).



TABLE 3  
CBC NETWORK PRIME TIME SCHEDULE (WINTER 1975)

PM	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:00	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local	Beach-combers \$24,000 65,000 -41,000
7:30	Local	Black Beauty \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000	Music Machine \$24,000 15,000 + 9,000	House of Pride \$24,000 30,000 -6,000	Howie Meeker/ Mr. Chips \$24,000 20,000 + 4,000	Maude \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000	Irish Rovers \$24,000 15,000 + 9,000
8:00	Mary Tyler Moore \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000	Happy Days \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000	Nature of Things/ This Land \$24,000 15,000 + 9,000	Carol Burnett \$48,000 4,000 + 44,000	All in the Family \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000	Hockey Night in Canada/ The Pallisers*	The Waltons \$48,000 4,000 + 44,000
8:30	This is the Law \$24,000 8,500 + 15,500	Police Story \$48,000 4,000 + 44,000	Musicamera \$48,000 40,000 + 8,000		M.A.S.H. \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000		
9:00	Cannon \$48,000 4,000 + 44,000			Stompin Tom's Canada \$24,000 15,000 + 9,000	Tommy Hunter \$48,000 30,000 + 18,000		Sam Adams/ Collaborators/ Anthology Drama/ Performance \$ 48,000 120,000 -72,000
9:30		Front Page Challenge \$24,000 8,500 + 15,500	Third Testament/ Specials \$48,000 40,000 + 8,000	Chico and the Man \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000			
10:00	Naked Mind/ Middle Age/ Old Timers \$ 9,500 15,000 -5,500	Up Canada \$ 9,500 15,000 -5,500		Adrienne at Large \$ 9,500 15,000 -5,500	Rhoda \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000		Market Place Documentary \$ 9,500 15,000 -5,500
10:30	People of Our Time/ Man Alive \$ 8,500 15,000 -6,500	News-magazine \$ 8,500 15,000 -6,500	First Person Singular/ Pacific Canada \$ 8,500 20,000 -11,500	Some Honorable Members \$ 8,500 15,000 -6,500	Man about the House/ Gallery \$20,500 2,000 + 18,500		Ombudsman \$ 8,500 15,000 -6,500

Revenue - Costs = Margin per program.

\* Both Hockey and The Pallisers fall outside the pricing norms used for the other programs, and so figures are not included here.

TABLE 4  
CTV NETWORK PRIME TIME SCHEDULE (WINTER 1975)

PM	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:00	Ian Tyson  \$16,000 15,000 + 1,000	Headline Hunters  \$16,000 8,500 + 7,500	That's My Mama  \$23,000 2,000 + 21,000	Funny Farm  \$16,000 15,000 + 1,000	Swiss Family Robinson \$16,000 65,000 -49,000	Emergency  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000	Born Free  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000
7:30	\$6,000,000 Man  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000	Tuesday Night Movie \$79,000 6,000 + 73,000	Local	Excuse My French \$16,000 30,000 -14,000	The Rookies \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000		
8:00			Hockey Night in Canada/ Movies	Kung Fu  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000		Academy Perform- ance \$92,000 12,500 + 79,500	Kojak  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000
8:30	Streets of San Francisco \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000				Adam 12  \$23,000 2,000 + 21,000		
9:00		Marcus Welby  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000		Police Surgeon \$16,000 65,000 -49,000	Friday Mystery Movie \$92,000 8,000 + 84,000		Medical Centre  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000
9:30	Pig'n Whistle \$16,000 15,000 + 1,000			Maclear \$16,000 15,000 + 1,000			
10:00	Ironside \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000	Harry-O \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000		Nakia \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000		Local	W5 \$32,000 30,000 + 2,000
10:30			Banjo Parlour \$16,000 15,000 + 1,000			Local	

Revenue - Costs = Margin per program.

TABLE 5  
 HALF-HOUR SEGMENTS ACCORDING TO  
 COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND PROGRAM TYPE,\*  
 TORONTO MARKET AREA  
 28 OCTOBER - 3 NOVEMBER 1974

Country of origin	Canadian public					Canadian private					Canadian private				
	V	NV	N	S	T	V	NV	N	S	T	V	NV	N	S	T
Canada	6	58	26	10	60	3	69	24	4	36	68	18	14	33	
US	21	79			33	82	16		2	64	54	38		8	57
Britain	20	80			6						100				8
Other		100			1						100				2
Total (%)	12	67	15	6	100	55	35	8	2	100	31	54	6	9	100
	Canadian private					Canadian private					American private				
	V	NV	N	S	T	V	NV	N	S	T	V	NV	N	S	T
Canada		46	48	6	39		82	13	5	45	100				1
US	49	51			44	51	49			49	39	40	14	7	99
Britain	43	57			17	40			60	6					
Other															
Total (%)	29	50	19	2	100	25	63	6	6	100	39	39	15	7	100
	American private					American private					All stations Total (%)				
	V	NV	N	S	T	V	NV	N	S	T	V	NV	N	S	T
Canada											3	64	25	8	27
US	36	42	14	8	100	43	25	20	12	100	47	38	9	6	68
Britain											24	66		10	4
Other											100				1
Total (%)	36	42	14	8	100	43	25	20	12	100	34	47	13	6	100

\*In this table program type refers to violent, non-violent, news, and sports.  
 V = violent, NV = non-violent, N = news, S = sports, T = total.

However, for the television industry in Canada to survive without inexpensive U.S.-produced programming, new sources of monies would have to be found. Even then there is no guarantee that Canadians would quickly change their well-established habit of viewing American violent programs either off-air from U.S. border stations, or via cable distribution.

## Les réalités économiques de la production canadienne

### INTRODUCTION

Il est essentiel de prendre en considération les facteurs économiques quand on évalue la quantité et la nature des émissions dites violentes que



l'on présente à la télévision canadienne. La dimension proportionnelle des marchés canadiens et américains, la nature des programmes importés ainsi que celle des maisons de coproduction, l'esprit de concurrence que règne entre les réseaux canadiens et ceux des Etats-Unis situés dans les régions frontalières et câblées, tout ceci a une influence sur l'amalgame de ce que regardent en fait les Canadiens, comme aussi sur les genres d'émissions qui sont produites ici.

Par exemple, le radiodiffuseur commercial canadien est influencé dans ses décisions d'achat et de programmation par l'ensemble des stratégies marchandises mises au point par les radiodiffuseurs américains et les maisons de production d'émissions, à qui il fait souvent concurrence, ou bien de qui il achète les émissions.

A cause de la terrible différence de la taille du marché, entraînant ainsi un écart entre les revenus possibles et les frais de production, l'option "production ou achat" devient, on ne peut plus, une question d'économie aux yeux des radiodiffuseurs canadiens. D'une façon générale, les séries américaines d'une heure, qu'il s'agisse d'action ou d'aventure, récupèrent leurs frais de production grâce aux ventes que rapporte un réseau américain. Des séries telles que "Mannix", "Cannon" et "Kojak" sont achetées par le réseau américain à raison de \$250,000 par épisode, tandis qu'un radiodiffuseur canadien (et tout autre acheteur étranger) peut acheter les mêmes séries pour aussi peu que \$5,000.

Du reste, à cause de son immense marché national, un réseau américain peut demander au-delà de \$100,000 par minute pour les messages commerciaux, assurant un auditoire d'au moins 20 millions de téléspectateurs aux heures de pointe. Les frais d'affiliation et les coûts de distribution d'un réseau, ajoutés aux frais d'achat et de production, laissent une moyenne bien mince lorsqu'il s'agit de considérer à la fois le pourcentage et la valeur réelle du dollar au Canada.

En marge de ces réalités économiques, cela signifie que les émissions achetées à l'étranger, subventionnent, de fait, la production d'émissions canadiennes d'un réseau commercial. Les coûts de production au Canada, bien qu'ils soient moins élevés qu'aux Etats-Unis, sont encore suffisamment élevés pour peser sur les réalités pratiques auxquelles doit faire face un réseau quand il planifie sa propre programmation. Une étude sur ce que le réseau CTV produit chez lui nous le démontre très clairement: la grille-horaire pour l'automne 1974 aux heures de pointe comprend quatre émissions musicales d'une demi-heure, deux émissions d'actualité, un quizz et trois séries dramatiques. Les deux dernières sont des coproductions, ce qui veut dire que CTV a déboursé uniquement une

partie des budgets consacrés à la production (estimés dans ces cas-là à environ \$70,000 pour chaque épisode d'une demi-heure). Les autres séries dramatiques étaient des comédies de situation produites en studio sur bande magnétoscopique et coûtaient à peu près la moitié de ce que les deux autres séries filmées ont coûté. Les coûts moyens d'émission d'une demi-heure pour les autres séries s'élevaient à près de \$15,000 à \$20,000.

Aux heures de pointe, on remarque que les téléspectateurs nord-américains préfèrent des séries dramatiques aux autres formules télévisées. Il s'ensuit que les réseaux américains achètent très peu de séries consacrées à la musique et aux spectacles de variétés. Ils se spécialisent dans des formules d'action, d'aventure et de comédie de situation, couvrant une heure, ou dans le cas des plus courtes, une demi-heure. Les téléspectateurs canadiens (tout comme les téléspectateurs britanniques et européens) aiment encore les émissions musicales, probablement parce qu'une gamme considérable de ces émissions leur est offerte par leurs propres réseaux. Ainsi, cette formule, de même que celles des affaires publiques, sont devenues des formules très classiques de la production télévisée canadienne et européenne. Elles ont l'avantage d'être économiques quand il faut considérer l'emploi d'installations techniques, l'exploitation des talents et les considérations purement matérielles.

Le radiodiffuseur peut soutenir que produire des émissions d'action ou d'aventure purement canadiennes, bien que ce soit un but fort noble, serait une mauvaise utilisation du budget, déjà restreint, réservé à la programmation canadienne. Les réseaux canadiens peuvent choisir de telles émissions éprouvées en provenance soit des Etats-Unis, soit de l'Angleterre.

La domination de la distribution américaine existe naturellement à cause de la similitude culturelle des marchés anglophones et de la disponibilité de programmes que l'on peut considérer comme "vendus à l'avance". La coproduction de ces séries est rendue possible car elle restreint la mise de fonds exigée des réseaux canadiens. Cela, en vérité, a été la tactique habituelle du réseau CTV pour des émissions comme "Police Surgeon" et "The Swiss Family Robinson".

Afin de fournir d'autres types de séries dramatiques canadiennes, les réseaux commerciaux canadiens ont tenté d'opter pour une formule mixte de comédie de situation/téléromans dans laquelle les producteurs estiment que les Canadiens excellent, où les coûts sont relativement peu élevés et où les thèmes et les situations nationales familières peuvent

être le mieux exploités. A moins d'avoir une subvention venant de l'extérieur, il n'y a que la Société Radio-Canada qui peut vraiment se permettre de produire des formules d'action/aventure d'une durée d'une heure comparables à ce qui se fait aux Etats-Unis et en Angleterre. Elle est également en mesure de proposer un plus grand nombre et une plus grande variété d'émissions dramatiques ce qui n'est pas le cas aux réseaux commerciaux américains. A la suite de cette introduction, nous allons approfondir davantage les thèmes que nous avons juste effleurés jusqu'ici.

## LA RADIODIFFUSION ET LE DEVELOPPEMENT ECONOMIQUE CANADIEN

On a beaucoup écrit sur la dimension et la distribution géographique du marché canadien ainsi que sur ses rapports avec toutes les formes de l'expansion économique. Ce facteur a aussi exercé une influence sur le secteur de la radiodiffusion de sorte qu'il a constitué une préoccupation majeure dans la production des programmes canadiens.

La dimension du marché, proportionnelle à celle des Etats-Unis, a beaucoup pesé sur les structures de l'industrie canadienne, et par conséquent sur la politique nationale. La dimension du marché est importante en ce qui a trait à la production lorsque des économies d'échelle prévalent, sinon la production sera soit très dispendieuse soit de qualité inférieure. Ceci aura pour résultat de favoriser l'importation de produits au détriment de la production nationale. Telle a été la situation à laquelle devait faire face une grande partie de l'industrie canadienne, et, rappelons-le, son marché ne représentait que le dixième de celui des Etats-Unis. S'il fallait qu'il n'y ait aucune intervention, les Etats-Unis auraient profité de cette situation, et c'est pourquoi les gouvernements nationaux ont exercé leur droit de protéger et d'alimenter l'industrie canadienne, mais avec un succès mitigé. Ainsi la protection tarifaire a assuré l'existence de nombreuses industries canadiennes, mais aux frais du consommateur qui a dû payer plus cher des produits fabriqués sur le sol national et acquitter des droits d'entrée ajoutés au prix des marchandises importées. Une autre conséquence de cette menace a été la politique expansionniste ce qui, entre autres, a eu pour effet d'entraîner la construction des voies ferrées et des pipe-lines. Pour les raisons suivantes, une industrie est appelée stratégique et par conséquent l'on ne devrait pas compter sur son existence qui est déterminée uniquement par l'offre et la demande: telle industrie particulière utilise des ressources importantes; elle fournit un type d'emploi qui repose sur le "capital humain" et non sur le travail physique; elle est importante à la sécurité nationale; ou bien elle en rehausse le prestige. De toutes ces raisons il découle qu'elles se rapportent à la nature de l'industrie plutôt qu'à l'utilité



du produit. Car la valeur consommable du produit est propre à l'individu qui choisit de le consommer.

Cependant, il existe une autre catégorie d'industrie, incluant la radiodiffusion, considérée comme stratégique en fonction de la valeur du produit et de son utilité pour la société, plutôt qu'en fonction de sa nature découlant du mode de production. Ces produits tendent à être culturels en ce sens qu'ils informent la collectivité, illustrent les valeurs sociales en même temps qu'ils divertissent l'individu. Pour assurer un minimum de présence nationale, les gouvernements n'ont pas pratiqué la politique du laisser-faire dans des industries culturelles telles que celles du film, de la télévision, du théâtre, des arts plastiques et du livre.

En ce qui concerne la télévision, de telles économies d'échelle ainsi que les dimensions restreintes du marché ont, comme pour d'autres industries, placées l'industrie canadienne de production d'émissions dans une position désavantagée. Du point de vue de la demande, les revenus sont limités par le nombre de téléspectateurs possibles, qui est de 21,600,000 au Canada (divisés dans une proportion de 1 à 4 par la langue) contre 203,000,000 aux Etats-Unis. Du point de vue de l'offre, la qualité d'une émission d'un format donné dépend, dans une certaine mesure, des dépenses faites au moment de la production; et celles-ci peuvent être considérées comme une condition nécessaire mais non la seule si l'on veut une émission de qualité. En d'autres termes, on ne peut pas affirmer que la qualité d'une action filmée ou d'un drame d'aventure ne dépende pas des moyens financiers utilisés, bien qu'il puisse exister un seuil au-delà duquel l'argent n'améliore pas la qualité. Mais si les revenus disponibles étant donné la dimension du marché sont inférieurs au minimum des ressources nécessaires à l'émission (que ce soient les frais de distribution ou l'obtention d'un profit normal), rien n'encourage plus la production nationale; et il n'y aura de production que si l'on trouve d'autres ressources financières ou si le marché parvient à être élargi.

La dimension du marché et les contraintes imposées par l'économie d'échelle à la production des émissions expliquent pourquoi, dans une certaine mesure, la programmation de télévision produite au Canada (tout comme en Europe) diffère de celle que l'on peut obtenir aux sources américaines, les séries dramatiques filmées en étant un exemple typique.

Le financement de la télévision assuré par la publicité au Canada se trouve renforcé par d'autres sources de revenus; l'allocation fédérale, et maintenant l'apport de ressources provinciales, dépassent en importance les revenus provenant du secteur privé de la télévision. Cependant, un autre avantage tout aussi important, même s'il est moins évident, découle

des structures relatives au prix de la publicité et de la programmation; grâce à ces structures, la marge de profit provenant des émissions étrangères, en particulier de celles qui passent aux heures de pointe, aide à la diffusion des productions canadiennes. Cette relation représente un aspect économique important du système actuel et nous démontrerons que, si tel n'était pas le cas, les contraintes économiques seraient parvenues à réduire considérablement la production canadienne à un niveau très inférieur à celui de sa production actuelle.

L'expansion du marché par les ventes à l'étranger n'est pas un phénomène qu'on encourage en général, car la proportion de ces ventes ne représente qu'une faible source de revenus pour le système de la radiodiffusion canadienne. Dans l'ensemble, quand des émissions produites au Canada sont exportées, elles ont été coproduites avec des capitaux canadiens et étrangers. Il va sans dire que les recettes provenant des ventes à l'étranger sont proportionnelles au capital investi par les Canadiens. Pour les coproductions, les radiodiffuseurs canadiens ne retirent qu'une fraction seulement des fonds réservés à la production, mais ce mode d'opération présente un désavantage, à moins de ventes suffisantes d'émissions aux Etats-Unis (le plus grand marché en puissance) il y a très peu de chance que les radiodiffuseurs puissent faire leurs frais. Un autre désavantage est que le contenu et les formules des coproductions sont établis selon les critères du marché principal, en l'occurrence le marché américain. Ainsi, à la suite de décisions prises récemment par les Américains, la coproduction de deux séries dramatiques canadiennes a été abandonnée.

## L'ECONOMIE DE BASE DES EMISSIONS DE TELEVISION CANADIENNES

Les contraintes économiques pesant sur l'industrie de la radio-télévision deviennent plus évidentes si l'on analyse, à titre d'exemple, les émissions des deux principaux réseaux anglais de télévision, CBC et CTV, aux heures de pointe. Bien que la plupart des données soient approximatives, étant donné le caractère confidentiel des renseignements concernant l'état financier d'un réseau, cette analyse s'avérera néanmoins un point de départ assez juste pour notre discussion.

A partir de la grille des émissions de la saison 1974-75, nous avons estimé les recettes de chaque heure ou demi-heure en utilisant les prix des messages commerciaux tels qu'ils ont été publiés, et en supposant que, pour chaque heure, 80% du maximum des minutes allouées à la publicité ont été vendues. Les recettes réelles sont influencées par d'autres facteurs tels que les rabais spéciaux et les "blocs" qui incitent

les annonceurs à faire passer des réclames à la fois dans les émissions américaines et dans les émissions canadiennes.\*

Le Tableau 1 est une estimation des frais de production des émissions canadiennes.

TABLEAU 1  
FRAIS DE PRODUCTION DES EMISSIONS CANADIENNES  
DIFFUSÉES AUX HEURES DE POINTE†

Type d'émission	Frais par demi-heure
Variétés	\$ 15,000
Musicales	\$ 20,000
Séries dramatiques	
—sur bande magnétoscopique	\$ 30,000
—filmées	\$ 65,000
Affaires publiques	\$ 15,000
Documentaires	\$ 20,000
Jeux	\$ 8,500

Aux Etats-Unis, les frais de production pour les émissions de divertissement, qui passent aux heures de pointe sur les principaux réseaux, sont nettement différents, surtout parce que le marché américain, faisant de plus larges recettes publicitaires, à cause de ses dimensions, peut attribuer plus d'argent à la production de ces formules et améliorer les émissions en leur attribuant des sommes bien plus grandes que ce qu'on peut leur consacrer ici.

\*L'estimation des recettes est faite à partir de *Canadian Advertising Rates and Data*, janvier 1975. Pour CTV, on utilise le prix des 30 secondes pendant 52 semaines, tandis que pour CBC, on utilise le prix d'une minute valable pour les 43 stations (on a supposé que, de 22 heures à 23 heures, quand CBC traite des affaires publiques, deux minutes seulement par demi-heure sont vendues). Le hockey a été exclu parce que cette émission est subventionnée.

†Il se produit souvent un écart entre le coût de la production et la somme payée par un réseau pour une émission. Cette différence peut être couverte par une station affiliée, membre du réseau, comme c'est le cas pour CTV. Mêmes les maisons de production américaines déclarent que leur prix de ventes des réseaux ne couvre pas leurs frais de production, de sorte qu'elles accordent encore plus d'importance à leurs ventes à l'étranger ("Producers say crunch hurts in the costs networks pay," *Broadcasting*, 21 juillet 1975, p.25).



Les émissions américaines du genre que l'on importe au Canada sont produites au coût de \$125,000 par demi-heure,\* situation typique et tout à fait logique. Cependant, ce n'est pas tellement le coût de production, qui importe aux radiodiffuseurs canadiens lors de la décision de la programmation mais plutôt le prix d'achat comme tel. Celui-ci est de l'ordre de \$2,000 seulement, parce que les frais de production, payés par NBC, CBS ou ABC, ont été déjà largement sinon entièrement amortis sur le marché américain. Il est clair que même si les auditoires et par conséquent les recettes des importations canadiennes et américaines sont les mêmes, il y a une différence considérable dans la marge par heure demeurant après que les frais d'achat ou de production ont été soustraits des recettes (en fait, les auditoires sont, en moyenne, moins importants pour les émissions canadiennes, mais cet aspect a été traité et par conséquent, il n'est pas nécessaire d'avoir recours à des raisons subtiles pour expliquer la prédominance des émissions étrangères—c'est tout simplement une proposition commerciale supérieure).

Pour plus de précision, examinons le programme de CTV, en janvier 1975, aux heures de pointe; la marge bénéficiaire moyenne par demi-heure d'émission canadienne est de \$55, tandis que pour une émission étrangère, elle est de \$21,000 par demi-heure. Cette estimation exclut les deux coproductions "Swiss Family Robinson" et "Police Surgeon", puisque seule une partie des frais de production a été payée par CTV. Cependant, si ces deux émissions avaient été produites sans l'aide d'un financement en coproduction, la marge bénéficiaire moyenne aurait occasionné une perte de \$8,760 par demi-heure. Faisons le même calcul pour le programme équivalent du réseau anglais de Radio-Canada aux heures de pointe: la marge moyenne déficitaire est de \$2,050 par demi-heure pour les émissions canadiennes et le "profit" enregistré pour les émissions étrangères est de l'ordre de \$20,600. Tandis que les mêmes forces économiques s'appliquent à la radiodiffusion d'état, Radio-Canada subit une contrainte moindre puisque son allocation gouvernementale de \$297,900,149 dépasse de beaucoup les recettes nettes de \$59,936,000 qu'elle obtient grâce à la publicité à la télévision.†

\*Ce que les réseaux américains payent aux producteurs de ces émissions est publié par exemple dans *Broadcasting* du 12 mai 1975, pp. 22-23, et ces renseignements nous ont servi de base pour cette estimation des frais. Le total réel des dépenses de production par épisode est probablement un peu plus élevé. Une fois que les droits sur les émissions détenus par les réseaux prennent fin (habituellement après deux reprises), les producteurs peuvent encore percevoir des recettes à la suite de nouvelles formes de distribution. De tels surplus de ventes permettent aux producteurs d'absorber certains coûts qui ne correspondent pas à la politique des réseaux américains qui consiste à payer un prix fixe quel que soit le coût de production réel.

†Rapport annuel de Radio-Canada, 1974-75, p. 70. À la télévision, les recettes publicitaires nettes sont les recettes publicitaires brutes moins les commissions aux agences et aux réseaux.

On peut conclure que les marges bénéficiaires importantes entre les recettes et les dépenses, dans le cas des émissions importées, assurent l'existence et la qualité des émissions canadiennes. En d'autres termes, les marges bénéficiaires que rapporte une production canadienne ne suffiraient pas à maintenir à l'horaire les émissions canadiennes sans les recettes perçues des émissions étrangères.\*

N'allons toutefois pas en déduire, par ce que nous venons de dire, que la production d'émissions canadiennes ne sera jamais une affaire rentable; nous avons seulement décrit la situation telle qu'elle existe. Deuxièmement, nous n'avons pas discuté de la question à savoir quelle est la marge adéquate pour une émission aux heures de pointe; ceci dépasse le cadre de notre exposé. Cette marge ne doit pas seulement permettre de payer la production d'émissions ou de couvrir les frais d'achat, elle doit aussi couvrir les frais de diffusion, de vente, d'administration, de dépréciation, et assurer un niveau raisonnable de profit. De plus, presque toutes les émissions canadiennes sont produites par les réseaux eux-mêmes ou par leurs stations affiliées. Il resterait à faire une étude sur la situation des petits producteurs indépendants, comme cela a déjà été fait aux Etats-Unis.

## LA DEMANDE D'EMISSIONS

La fixation des tarifs publicitaires et des dépenses concernant les émissions sont fonction du niveau des téléspectateurs. Les émissions canadiennes, à cause de leur caractère particulier aux heures de pointe, ne captent pas souvent l'attention d'auditoires aussi nombreux et n'obtiennent pas une cote d'écoute aussi élevée (pourcentage de l'écoute totale) que les émissions étrangères.

Selon l'enquête du Bureau of Broadcast Measurement (BBM) réalisée à Toronto pour l'automne 1974, seulement 5 des 20 émissions les plus suivies étaient canadiennes, et dans ce nombre on trouvait deux émissions de nouvelles et une de hockey NHL. De plus, seule cette dernière figurait parmi les dix premières: elle était classée quatrième (voir Tableau 2).

Les tarifs publicitaires reflètent naturellement cette situation. Comme nous le montre la structure des tarifs que propose CTV, pour les heures de pointe, le prix de la publicité, dans une émission canadienne, pour un seul message de 30 secondes, est inférieur de 22% au prix d'un message équivalent dans une émission non canadienne. Dans la pratique, il y a

\*Tel n'est pas le cas pour la principale station privée de langue française au Québec. Elle utilise peu de séries importées, par contre elle attire beaucoup de téléspectateurs et fait un profit raisonnable en se servant de sa propre production qui lui revient à un prix relativement bas.

TABLEAU 2  
LES 20 ÉMISSIONS LES PLUS POPULAIRES À TORONTO  
(ADULTES DE 18 ANS ET PLUS)\*

Programme	Cote d'écoute	Violent Non-Violent Sport Nouvelles†	Pays d'origine	Auditoire Total
Film (Midnight Cowboy)	20	V-2	E-U	397,422
All in the Family	18	N.V.	E-U	357,679
M.A.S.H.	18	N.V.	E-U	357,679
NHL Hockey	17	Sport	C	337,808
Rhoda (WBEN-TV)	14	N.V.	E-U	278,195
Ironside	13	V-1	E-U	258,311
Harry-O	13	V-1	E-U	258,311
Rhoda (CBLT)	12	N.V.	E-U	238,441
Mary Tyler Moore	12	N.V.	E-U	238,441
Film (New Centurions)	12	V-2	E-U	238,441
Kojac	12	V-1	E-U	238,441
Collaborators	11	V-2	C	218,571
World Beat (Monday)	11	Nouvelles	C	218,571
Cannon	10	V-1	E-U	198,010
Ceilidh	10	N.V.	C	198,701
Man about the House	10	N.V.	G-B	198,701
Rockford Files	10	V-1	E-U	198,701
Walt Disney	10	N.V.	E-U	198,701
World Beat (Wednesday)	10	Nouvelles	C	198,701
Streets of San Francisco	9	V-1	E-U	178,839
Total		9-violent 8-non-violent 1-sport 2-nouvelles	14-E-U 5-Canadien 1-Grand-Bretagne	

\*BBM, Automne 1974.

†Pour l'explication de la méthodologie utilisée pour ce codage, voir "Notes sur les préférences du public, les sources de production et la quantité d'émissions violentes, et non-violentes dans quelques marchés canadiens", C.R.T.C., direction de la recherche, 1975.

V-1: classées émissions à caractère violent selon la compilation de telles émissions.

V-2: classées émissions à caractère violent après consultation du résumé de l'émission du "TV Guide".

N-V: non-violence.

même un rabais supplémentaire pour les émissions canadiennes puisque les prix décroissent suivant une échelle graduée lorsque l'on paye 52 messages de 30 secondes. Dans les émissions non canadiennes, le prix à la semaine est plus bas de 22% si l'on insère un message pendant 52



semaines, tandis que pour les émissions canadiennes, le rabais équivalent est de 30%. Il existe une autre façon d'encourager les annonceurs à placer leurs messages dans les émissions canadiennes: c'est le rabais global qui s'applique dans le cas d'une combinaison de messages insérés dans des émissions canadiennes et dans des émissions non canadiennes.\*

Si l'on examine la structure des tarifs du point de vue de l'annonceur, on peut utiliser alors une méthode rationnelle pour faire le calcul des frais entre les émissions canadiennes et les émissions étrangères, pour 1,000 téléspectateurs. Prenons la grille des programmes de CTV pour l'automne 1974 et comparons l'écoute réelle telle qu'elle est indiquée par le BBM; suivant les tarifs publicitaires appropriés à chaque émission, les calculs montrent que, dans les émissions canadiennes, les frais pour 1,000 téléspectateurs sont de \$1.34, tandis que dans les émissions étrangères (elles sont toutes américaines dans le présent échantillon), les frais sont de \$1.32.† Les émissions canadiennes moins suivies nécessitent donc un tarif de publicité distinct pour que soient égalisés les coûts nécessaires pour atteindre les téléspectateurs.

## LA VIOLENCE DANS UNE PERSPECTIVE ECONOMIQUE

Que peut-on dire des rapports entre la violence et les variables économiques dans la production et le visionnement des émissions?

Notons en premier lieu que les émissions dites violentes sont principalement des émissions importées des Etats-Unis. Si l'on classe toutes les sections d'émissions d'une demi-heure, montrées à Toronto, en fonction du pays d'origine et des catégories violente, non violente, sports et nouvelles, on constate que 34% des émissions, de toute origine, sont violentes, et que la plus grande partie d'entre elles (68%) est d'origine américaine. Quarante-sept pour cent des émissions américaines contre seulement 3% des émissions canadiennes contiennent des éléments de violence. Ces émissions sont du type drame ou film d'aventures ou d'action, ce qui les classe dans la catégorie des émissions "dispendieuses". Comme nous l'avons expliqué plus haut, la production au Canada de ce genre d'émissions ne peut pas être financée uniquement par des recettes publicitaires. Pourtant, il semble qu'il y ait un rapport entre les frais de production et la violence car les émissions de ce genre constituent une forme de production des plus coûteuses et des plus complexes techniquement parlant. Les séries dramatiques présentées à la télévision

\*Fiche d'écoute, janvier 1975.

† Pour calculer les frais pour 1,000 téléspectateurs, nous avons utilisé le prix des 30 secondes pendant 52 semaines.

américaine ont été orientées vers le crime et la violence; c'est donc consciemment qu'un tel choix d'émission est effectué.\*

TABLEAU 3  
POURCENTAGE DES SECTIONS D'ÉMISSIONS D'UNE DEMI-HEURE  
EN FONCTION DU PAYS D'ORIGINE ET DU TYPE 1  
ZONE DU MARCHÉ DE TORONTO  
DU 28 OCTOBRE AU 3 NOVEMBRE 1974\*

Pays d'origine	CBLT					CFTO					CHCH				
	V	NV	N	S	T	V	NV	N	S	T	V	NV	N	S	T
Canada	6	58	26	10	60	3	69	24	4	36	68	18	14	33	
États-Unis	21	79			33	82	16		2	64	54	38		8	57
Grande-Bretagne	20	80			6						100				8
Autres		100			1						100				2
% total	12	67	15	6	100	55	35	8	2	100	31	54	6	9	100
	CKGN					CITY					WGR				
	V	NV	N	S	T	V	NV	N	S	T	V	NV	N	S	T
Canada		46	48	6	39		82	13	5	45	100				1
États-Unis	49	51			44	51	49			49	39	40	14	7	99
Grande-Bretagne	43	57			17		40		60	6					
Autres															
% total	29	50	19	2	100	25	63	6	6	100	39	39	15	7	100
	WKBW					WBEN					Toutes les stations % total				
	V	NV	N	S	T	V	NV	N	S	T	V	NV	N	S	T
Canada											3	64	25	8	27
États-Unis	36	42	14	8	100	43	25	20	12	100	47	38	9	6	68
Grande-Bretagne											24	66		10	4
Autres											100				1
% total	36	42	14	8	100	43	25	20	12	100	34	47	13	6	100

\*Dans ce tableau, V = violent, NV = non-violent, N = nouvelles, S = sports, et T = total.

Peut-on prouver que les émissions violentes sont en très grande demande? Il semble que ce soit le cas si l'on s'en tient aux données des

\*Il existe un état structurel de la télévision commerciale qui n'est pas traité ici, mais qui est lié aux questions que l'on se pose, à savoir pourquoi le menu des émissions diffusées aux heures de pointe sur les trois réseaux américains est dominé seulement par quelques séries d'émissions (les séries dramatiques et les séries criminelles étant l'exemple typique), le choix des séries dramatiques américaines reste limité. Pour essayer de répondre à cette question, il faut se demander si l'appui économique inhérent à la concurrence publicitaire entre les réseaux encourage la diversité ou la duplication d'émissions. Une analyse rigoureuse est difficile à réaliser, mais il est à noter qu'une recherche en ce domaine a été faite de façon fort consciencieuse par B.M. Owen, J.H. Beebe, et W. G. Manning Jr. dans un livre intitulé *Television economics* (Lexington Books, Lexington, Mass., 1972).

statistiques de l'écoute réelle. Mais si l'on considère la gamme réelle des choix, on ne peut tirer aucune conclusion.

Si l'on se reporte maintenant aux vingt principales émissions passées à Toronto entre 17 heures et 23 heures (adultes, 18 ans et plus), on peut conclure que les émissions dites violentes ont été choisies tout de suite après les comédies de situation; mais si l'on considère la gamme réelle des choix dans la catégorie dite "divertissement léger", la situation pourrait être considérée comme légèrement plus grave. On ne trouve de choix véritable qu'entre les séries policières, les comédies de situation et, dans une moindre mesure, les variétés musicales. C'est pourquoi on n'explique rien en disant que le drame d'aventure occupe la deuxième place. Il existe un autre problème lorsque l'on tire des conclusions relatives à la "demande de violence" à partir des statistiques portant sur le visionnement c'est que le drame d'aventure ou d'action et la violence sont actuellement presque toujours synonymes, si l'on adopte une définition restreinte de la violence à la télévision. Il se peut que les téléspectateurs choisissent avant tout le drame qui, lorsqu'il se produit, est généralement violent.

Finalement on peut conclure que les émissions violentes jouissent d'une grande popularité mais on ne peut pas dire que, si la gamme des émissions de genre dramatique était élargie de manière à permettre un choix raisonnable, comme c'est le cas dans le marché francophone du Québec, la cote de la violence serait aussi élevée qu'elle paraît l'être actuellement. Du reste, il est bien plus facile d'établir une grille d'émissions concurrentielle à partir de productions amalgamées d'émissions d'une heure et d'une demi-heure. Les émissions d'action ou d'aventure ont tendance à être toutes d'une heure (ou davantage), tandis que les comédies de situation et la plupart des séries canadiennes sont d'une durée plus courte.

## L'IMPACT DES TECHNOLOGIES DE DIFFUSION

L'évolution technique, dans les systèmes de diffusion, a eu et continuera d'avoir une influence sur disponibilité des émissions télévisées, par exemple grâce à des changements relatifs à la qualité des signaux, la capacité des canaux et la dimension du marché. A la suite des progrès réalisés dans la technologie de la radiodiffusion hertzienne, les innovations ayant un impact actuel sont les systèmes de télévision par câble et les micro-ondes à longue distance.

La télévision par câble est l'innovation la plus répandue. En 1974, 65.1% des foyers canadiens étaient desservis par le câble, tandis que 40.8% des foyers avaient décidé de s'y abonner; ainsi le pourcentage des



TABLEAU 4  
HORAIRE DES ÉMISSIONS DIFFUSÉE AUX HEURE DE POINTE  
SUR LE RESEAU CTV (HIVER 1975)

Heure (pm)	Lundi	Mardi	Mercredi	Jeudi	Vendredi	Samedi	Dimanche
7:00	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local	Beach-combers \$24,000 65,000 -41,000
7:30	Local	Black Beauty  \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000	Music Machine  \$24,000 15,000 + 9,000	House of Pride  \$24,000 30,000 -6,000	Howie Meeker / Mr. Chips  \$24,000 20,000 + 4,000	Maude  \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000	Irish Rovers  \$24,000 15,000 + 9,000
8:00	Mary Tyler Moore \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000	Happy Days \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000	Nature of Things/ This Land \$24,000 15,000 + 9,000	Carol Burnett \$48,000 4,000 + 44,000	All in the Family \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000	Hockey Night in Canada/ The Pallisers*	The Waltons \$48,000 4,000 + 44,000
8:30	This is the Law \$24,000 8,500 + 15,500	Police Story \$48,000 4,000 + 44,000	Musicamera  \$48,000 40,000 + 8,000		M.A.S.H.  \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000		
9:00	Cannon  \$48,000 4,000 + 44,000			Stompin Tom's Canada  \$24,000 15,000 + 9,000	Tommy Hunter  \$48,000 30,000 + 18,000		Sam Adams/ Collaborators/ Anthology Drama/ Performance \$ 48,000 120,000 -72,000
9:30		Front Page Challenge  \$24,000 8,500 + 15,500	Third Testament/ Specials \$48,000 40,000 + 8,000	Chico and the Man  \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000			
10:00	Naked Mind/ Middle Age/ Old Timers \$ 9,500 15,000 -5,500	Up Canada \$ 9,500 15,000 -5,500		Adrienne at Large \$ 9,500 15,000 -5,500	Rhoda  \$24,000 2,000 + 22,000		Market Place Documentary \$ 9,500 15,000 -5,500
10:30	People of Our Time/ Man Alive  \$ 8,500 15,000 -6,500	News-magazine  \$ 8,500 15,000 -6,500	First Person Singular/ Pacifi-c Canada \$ 8,500 20,000 -11,500	Some Honorable Members  \$ 8,500 15,000 -6,500	Man about the House/ Gallery  \$20,500 2,000 + 18,500		Ombudsman  \$ 8,500 15,000 -6,500

Revenues - coût = Marge par émissions.

\* Les données concernant le hockey et "The Pallisers" n'apparaissent pas au tableau, ces émissions s'écartent des normes relatives à la fixation des coûts des autres émissions.

TABLEAU 5  
HORAIRE DES ÉMISSIONS DIFFUSÉES AUX HEURES DE POINTE  
SUR LE RESEAU CTV (HIVER 1975)

Heure (pm)	Lundi	Mardi	Mercredi	Jeudi	Vendredi	Samedi	Dimanche
7:00	Ian Tyson  \$16,000 15,000 + 1,000	Headline Hunters  \$16,000 8,500 + 7,500	That's My Mama  \$23,000 2,000 + 21,000	Funny Farm  \$16,000 15,000 + 1,000	Swiss Family Robinson  \$16,000 65,000 - 49,000	Emergency  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000	Born Free  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000
7:30	\$6,000,000 Man  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000	Tuesday Night Movie  \$79,000 6,000 + 73,000	Local	Excuse My French  \$16,000 30,000 - 14,000	The Rookies  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000		
8:00			Hockey Night in Canada/ Movies	Kung Fu  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000		Academy Perform- ance  \$92,000 12,500 + 79,500	Kojak  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000
8:30	Streets of San Francisco  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000				Adam 12  \$23,000 2,000 + 21,000		
9:00		Marcus Welby  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000		Police Surgeon  \$16,000 65,000 - 49,000	Friday Mystery Movie  \$92,000 8,000 + 84,000		Medical Centre  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000
9:30	Pig'n Whistle  \$16,000 15,000 + 1,000			Maclear  \$16,000 15,000 + 1,000			
10:00	Ironside  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000	Harry-O  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000		Nakia  \$46,000 4,000 + 42,000		Local	W5  \$32,000 30,000 + 2,000
10:30			Banjo Parlour  \$16,000 15,000 + 1,000			Local	

Revenues - coût = Marge par émission.

abonnés était de 62.7%. La télévision par câble offre au téléspectateur une amélioration de la qualité du signal et un choix accru grâce à l'importation de signaux provenant d'autres marchés. Cependant, la caractéristique économique la plus importante du câble n'est pas la capacité du canal, mais plutôt le fait que les signaux du câble sont guidés, par opposition au signal direct "que l'on trouve partout", ce qui permet à l'exploitant de contrôler le signal en le limitant à ceux qui payent pour le recevoir. Réciproquement, pour le public, le câble représente un mécanisme économique, qui remplace la télévision financée par la publicité et pour lequel on peut payer directement pour obtenir des émissions supplémentaires et complètement différentes.

Jusqu'à maintenant, le câble a eu un impact majeur. D'un point de vue positif, il a élargi le choix des canaux et par conséquent a augmenté la diversité des émissions, mais comme l'aspect le plus populaire du câble a été l'addition des canaux américains, la radiodiffusion canadienne s'est heurtée à l'obligation de faire concurrence aux stations américaines et de subir d'autres fragmentations d'auditoires. Selon l'estimation du Conseil, cela représente une perte de 6% des heures d'écoute des stations canadiennes. D'une manière générale, une perte d'écoute peut être traduite en perte de recettes, réduisant ainsi les fonds qui auraient pu être attribués à l'amélioration des émissions canadiennes.

## **Notes sur l'influence des instruments et des modes de production sur les "genres" d'émissions**

Parmi les textes de référence et les présentations préparées par la Direction de la recherche, quelques-uns traitent de certains facteurs qui ont une influence sur le produit présenté sur les ondes, dont, entre autres, un document sur les aspects économiques de la radiodiffusion.

Mais les outils servant à produire les émissions et le contexte général dans lequel ces émissions sont présentées doivent être également comptés parmi les éléments les plus importants conditionnant la production audiovisuelle.

Pour le profane, l'expression "émission de télévision" fait immédiatement songer à un studio fortement éclairé dans lequel évoluent d'énormes caméras électroniques, le tout surplombé par une salle de contrôle dont les murs sont tapissés d'écrans devant lesquels s'affairent réalisateur, script-assistante, techniciens, etc. Tous ces gens travaillent forcément dans une tension indissociable des émissions en direct.



Or cette image ne peut pas être plus éloignée de la réalité. Une étude chiffre à 11.8%, 16.8% et 12.5% le temps consacré aux émissions en direct sur les trois réseaux américains (heures de pointe, hiver 1971).<sup>1</sup> Le reste du temps, les réseaux mettent en ondes des émissions pré-enregistrées. Ces émissions sont en majorité enregistrées sur film (77.8%, 72.6%, 62.5%). A cette époque le réseau français de la Société Radio-Canada, pour sa part, ne présentait que 24% de sa programmation d'heure de pointe enregistrée sur film, sa propre production dramatique, les téléromans et les télé-théâtres étant enregistrés sur ruban magnétoscopique.

On aurait pu affirmer, sans guère risquer de se trouver dans l'erreur, que vers 1971, aux réseaux canadiens anglais et américains, la presque totalité des émissions sur films étaient des émissions dramatiques ou documentaires, les émissions enregistrées sur rubans magnétoscopiques étant en majorité des émissions de variétés, des quizz et quelques tables rondes.

Depuis quelques années, les radiodiffuseurs nord-américains ont réussi à briser la résistance que manifestaient les téléspectateurs à l'égard des séries dramatiques enregistrées sur vidéo. Il faut ici souligner que la qualité technique de l'image est différente lorsque le support est magnétoscopique ou filmique. La bande magnétoscopique est maintenant utilisée très fréquemment pour les séries comiques, particulièrement depuis le succès de la série américaine "All in the Family". Cette situation était pourtant différente aux deux réseaux d'expression française. Dès l'apparition de la télévision, les téléromans, diffusés en direct à partir des studios, ont remporté un énorme succès. Depuis quelques années, les radiodiffuseurs francophones tentent toutefois d'ouvrir quelque peu le champs visuel en incluant dans ces émissions des séquences tournées en extérieur. Cet état de choses peut sembler étonnant à première vue, si on considère l'importance du capital investi pour l'équipement électronique dans chaque station à travers le pays. Pour mieux saisir les raisons de cette situation, il est important de comprendre les avantages et les limites de chaque type d'instrument.

Lourd, encombrant, coûteux, peu mobile, l'équipement vidéo, cependant, se situe très utilement dans l'installation stable et permanente du studio. Permettant, grâce aux caméras multiples couplées au magnétoscope, un montage par simple permutation de source, il rend possible l'enregistrement de l'action dans le temps réel. Ces techniques, il faut se le rappeler, furent développées à un moment où la télévision ne possédait aucune méthode de stockage. Aussi, dans la plupart des émissions produites en vidéo, le montage est fait "dans la caméra", le travail de post-production

ne consistant qu'en un assemblage de segments. Le montage vidéo, posant de nombreux problèmes techniques, est encore lent et dispendieux. Ceci risque de changer d'ici quelques années grâce à l'apparition de nouveaux systèmes (ordinateur, numérotage d'images, utilisation de magnétoscopes un pouce pour premier montage, etc.) mais ces systèmes exigent une mise de fonds substantielle.

La caméra de cinéma par contre est légère, mobile, à l'aise dans la rue, en extérieur. Les nouvelles pellicules rendent son usage encore plus flexible et adaptable. Cependant, le temps de production avec caméra utilisant de la pellicule demeure plus long et les coûts de production s'en ressentent. Mais en définitive le contrôle sur le produit fini est plus grand, les décisions étant prises dans le calme d'une salle de montage plutôt que dans le feu de l'action immédiate.

"Cette flexibilité attire plusieurs réalisateurs et artistes, principalement ceux qui sont impliqués dans la production d'émissions de divertissement de type dramatique. C'est cette programmation de type cinématographique qui occupe la plus grande partie de la soirée des trois réseaux (américains)."<sup>2</sup> Ces diverses caractéristiques dictent jusqu'à un certain point le contenu des émissions. L'émission filmée se déroulera plus souvent à l'extérieur. On profitera de la disponibilité des décors naturels déjà existants et gratuits. L'image sera plus réaliste, moins synthétique. Le découpage pourra être rapide, nerveux. La caméra sera suffisamment mobile pour donner plusieurs points de vue. D'une façon générale, l'imagerie pourra être plus "ouverte". L'action dramatique deviendra alors elle aussi plus ouverte, le drame moins intimiste. L'environnement dans lequel vivent les personnages peut influencer leurs actions.

Aussi, le drame réaliste, enregistré sur bande magnétoscopique, utilisant un nombre restreint de décors coûteux et comportant peu, sinon aucune scène d'extérieur, tendra-t-il beaucoup plus à être l'histoire d'un conflit intérieur. Il traitera aussi de problèmes qui se rapprochent beaucoup du vécu quotidien. Ces types de conflits ne nécessitent pas de résolution violente, physique. Aussi peut-on constater que, d'une façon générale, les émissions vidéo ne comportent pas de scènes de violence physique. Ceci s'applique aussi bien aux séries américaines qu'aux séries canadiennes français ou aux télé-théâtres.

Il faut donc se rendre compte que le type et les caractéristiques des instruments de prise de vue et des modes de production qui en découlent tendent à privilégier certains types d'action ou de conflits dramatiques.

L'influence du cinéma se manifeste aussi dans les "genres" d'émissions.

La disparition presque totale du western en tant que genre cinématographique a eu des répercussions indirectes sur la production télévisée: "This year more than half of NBC's prime-time series are cops-and-robbers. When I went to work there, more than a quarter of the prime-time programs were Westerns. Now there aren't any."<sup>3</sup> Une des raisons de la permanence des séries filmées d'aventure, en dépit du succès des séries magnétoscopiques et des téléromans, se situe au niveau des délais de production. "Why two years ago? Well, the networks had to start their 'step' deals (first came the idea, then the treatment, then the script, etc.) for a September 1973 program, in mid-1972 or even earlier. In mid-1972, 'The Waltons' hadn't even had its première yet."<sup>3</sup>

Ainsi qu'on peut le constater dans la bibliographie sur la violence en tant qu'expression de conflit dramatique, l'utilisation de la violence dans les arts n'est pas un phénomène récent. Ce que l'on semble plutôt reprocher à la télévision est son utilisation répétée, abusive et gratuite de la violence. Gratuité en ce sens qu'elle est essentiellement utilisée comme une recette dramatique efficace, mais d'une façon isolée et mécanisée, dénuée de la valeur symbolique que l'on doit trouver dans une oeuvre d'art.

Pour comprendre ce fait, on doit situer la télévision et sa production dramatique dans son véritable contexte. Instrument audiovisuel différent du film par son mode de distribution, par sa méthode de récupération des coûts, par les types de contrôles qui l'affectent, etc., elle s'en rapproche par les méthodes de production qu'elle utilise. Ses techniciens sont ou bien formés par le cinéma ou bien ils s'en inspirent.

D'autres phénomènes influencent aussi directement la programmation qui nous est offerte à la télévision. Parmi ceux-ci, soulignons la durée pré-établie des oeuvres, d'une durée de 30, 60, ou 90 minutes. Cette concentration, inexistante dans la littérature, s'applique aussi à un degré moindre au cinéma et au théâtre, puisqu'on peut difficilement concevoir un spectacle durant beaucoup plus de trois heures. "Cette concentration indispensable du récit . . . aboutit, à la scène comme à l'écran, à la recherche de l'effet; elle donne une importance capitale au mouvement et au rythme; elle impose un choix très sûr des moments significatifs de l'action, et un lien bien sensible entre eux."<sup>4</sup>

En plus d'être limitées à des durées pré-établies, les émissions sont aussi soumises à des interruptions publicitaires. La plupart des critiques concernant les désagréments causés par ces interruptions s'adressent aux émissions qui ne furent pas conçues à l'origine pour la télévision, soit les longs métrages et le théâtre. Les interruptions dans les émissions



produites pour la télévision sont sans doute moins gênantes dans la mesure où ces émissions ont été conçues en vue de ces interruptions. Chaque partie de l'émission est souvent construite comme un épisode distinct, comportant un dénouement qui précède la pause publicitaire. Il s'agit là d'un facteur qui risque d'augmenter le nombre d'actions violentes dans une émission dramatique étant donné la nécessité d'animer dramatiquement chacun des segments constituant l'émission.

Ces nécessités d'origine économique imposent à la production un "pattern" qui risque d'introduire dans la conception des émissions une certaine mécanisation. Cette mécanisation a déjà sa place dans diverses phases du procédé de production. Tout comme dans la production cinématographique, l'enregistrement ne se fait pas selon l'ordre chronologique des scènes, mais est dicté par des considérations relevant des exigences de la production et de l'efficacité coût-rendement. Reflétant des pressions créées par l'appétit vorace de la télévision,<sup>5</sup> cette mécanisation de la production semble avoir atteint son summum avec ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler le "Fedderson System" du nom d'un producteur américain: afin d'augmenter la productivité et d'abaisser les coûts, on a imaginé de tourner à la suite toutes les scènes des épisodes d'une série de comédie de situation qui se déroulaient dans un même lieu scénique (cuisine, salon, etc.). Une technique similaire fut employée pour d'autres types de séries:

On Bonanza, for example, the whole team will go out on location for just two or three weeks in a season to shoot miles of stock footage for twenty or more episodes. The Cartwright brothers will be filmed from all angles riding across plains, through gullies, up hills and across rivers; selected clips can then be inserted as appropriate in future episodes. To ensure continuity the brothers always wear exactly the same clothes and ride the same horses year in, year out. If the story calls for one of them to be riding by a lake, a snippet of film shot perhaps two or three years earlier can be dug out, as their appearance is unchanged.<sup>6</sup>

Il est évident que de telles considérations d'ordre technique ne peuvent qu'enfermer les créateurs dans un carcan rigide. Si de plus, on considère les coûts de production des émissions télévisées (voir "Réalités économiques de la production canadienne," ci-dessus) et qu'on les compare à ceux des longs métrages,<sup>7</sup> on peut entrevoir immédiatement les problèmes auxquels doivent faire face les artisans de la télévision.

De la même façon que les outils influencent le type de production présenté, la faveur qu'obtiennent certains types d'émissions agit sur la conception des outils. Les caméras vidéo portatives étant principalement

utilisées pour les événements sportifs et la cueillette d'information, les nouveaux modèles sont difficilement utilisables pour les émissions dramatiques. Bien qu'offrant une meilleure qualité technique, elles sont plus volumineuses, l'écran témoin est conçu pour la cueillette de l'information et, sur un modèle de caméra, le système d'intercom consiste en un haut-parleur.<sup>8</sup> L'introduction d'une nouvelle technologie du visuel apporte automatiquement avec elle de nouveaux types d'images. Ces nouvelles images définissent pour nous une nouvelle perception de la réalité. Malheureusement, il arrive que l'acceptation massive de ces nouvelles techniques signifie leur préférence à d'autres univers imaginatifs et la disparition de ces univers, appauvrissant plutôt qu'enrichissant l'éventail des moyens d'expression humaine:

The films from the silent era that I still look at with great pleasure and that still seem almost modern fall roughly into four groups: those based on the ancient art of pantomime (Chaplin); those based on cinematic tricks (Keystone Cops); those that recorded real life (Flaherty); and those that used a stylized imagery of theatre or poetic form ("Caligari"). Then there are two groups that I find very odd to look at today: "play films" [and] . . . the extraordinary development that took place in the Soviet Union.

What happened with the advent of the first big technological change: sound? There is almost no pantomime any longer. . . . The old cinematic tricks no longer worked. In a modern chase sequence for example, the chase must be "realistic", largely because sound and dialogue impose real time upon film.

The Soviet tradition, with the exception of a few films which used the image much as before, adding sound in an operatic rather than a realistic manner, completely disappeared. There was no further need for a sign language. After a few years, the trend became very clear. The "play film", so unmemorable, though so numerous, when silent, had annihilated three species of film development, leaving itself and the recording of real life, the "documentary", to react in their particular ways to sound.

The play film, using synchronous sound dialogue—with an overlay of music to give dramatic values to wooden acting—began to inch slowly toward the kind of "realism" that we accept today.<sup>9</sup>

Cette revue des facteurs qui influencent les émissions présentées à la télévision, et par conséquent le degré d'action violente, ne se veut qu'un

rapide coup d'oeil. D'autres textes soulèvent d'autres facettes et démontrent la complexité de la radiodiffusion et les difficultés qui surgissent lorsqu'il s'agit de saisir dans son ensemble les multiples aspects des causes d'un problème l'affectant.

## **Notes on the influence of hardware and methods on program types**

Some of the reference materials and presentations prepared by the Research Branch for the Symposium deal with certain factors that influence what is shown on the air. One of these papers is on the economic aspects of broadcasting (see above). But the tools used to produce programs and the overall context in which these programs are presented should also be included among the most important factors influencing audio-visual production.

For the layman, the term "television program" immediately brings to mind a brightly-lit studio with enormous electronic cameras moving about, the whole scene overlooked by a control room where the walls are covered with screens in front of which the producer, script assistant, technicians, etc. are bustling about—all of necessity working under the stress that is inevitable in live broadcasts.

This picture could not be further from the truth. One study estimates the time devoted to live broadcasts on the three American networks (prime time, winter 1971) at 11.8%, 16.8%, and 12.5%.<sup>1</sup> The rest of the time, the networks air pre-recorded programs. For the most part, these are recorded on film (77.8%, 72.6%, 62.5%). At that time only 24% of the CBC French network's prime-time programming was recorded on film; television serials and plays were recorded on videotape.

It could have been said without much risk of error that in 1971, on the American and English Canadian networks, virtually all filmed programs were dramas or documentaries, while videotaped programs were for the most part variety, quiz, or discussion programs.

Some years ago North American broadcasters succeeded in overcoming the resistance shown by television viewers to videotaped drama series. It should be emphasized here that the technical quality of the picture is different with tape and film. Videotape is now used very often for comedy series, especially since the success of the American series "All in the Family." The situation was different, however, on the two French-language networks. From the time television appeared, serials, broadcast live from studios, achieved enormous success. For some years now, however, French-language broadcasters have been trying to expand the visual field



somewhat by including in these programs sequences shot on location. This state of affairs may seem surprising at first, considering the amount of capital invested in electronic equipment at every station across the country. To better comprehend the reasons for this situation, it is important to understand the advantages and limitations of each type of instrument.

Video equipment, while it is heavy, cumbersome, costly, and not very mobile, nevertheless has a very useful place in the stable and permanent studio installation. By the use of multiple cameras connected to the videotape recorder, it allows editing by simply switching the source and makes it possible to record action in real time. These techniques, it should be remembered, were developed at a time when television had no method of storage. In most videotaped programs, therefore, editing is done "in the camera"; post-production work consists only of assembling the segments. Videotape editing, which poses many technical problems, is still slow and costly. This may change in a few years with the appearance of new systems (computer, image numbering, use of one-inch videotape recorders for initial editing, etc.), but these systems require a substantial financial investment.

The film camera on the other hand is light, mobile, and convenient in the street or on location. The new films make it even more flexible and adaptable. Production time with a camera that uses film remains longer, and production costs are affected by this. But in the end, control over the finished product is greater, since decisions are made in the calm of an editing room rather than in the heat of the moment.<sup>2</sup>

These different characteristics to some extent determine the content of programs. Filmed programs will more often be set outdoors. They will take advantage of natural settings that already exist and cost nothing. The picture will be more realistic and less synthetic. The script can be fast-paced. The camera will be mobile enough to provide several viewing points. Generally speaking, the representation can be more "open" and the dramatic action will therefore also become more open, and the drama less interior. The environment in which the characters live can influence their actions.

Realistic drama, recorded on videotape, using a limited number of costly sets and containing, few, if any, outdoor scenes, will therefore tend to a much greater extent to be the story of an interior conflict. It will also deal with problems very close to daily life. Conflict of this type does not require violent physical resolution. It may therefore be said that, generally speaking, videotape broadcasts do not contain scenes of physical vio-

lence. This applies both to American and French Canadian series or television plays. It must therefore be understood that the nature and characteristics of the shooting equipment and of the attendant production methods tend to favor certain kinds of action or dramatic conflict.

The influence of film is also seen in types of programs. The almost complete disappearance of the western as a film genre has had indirect effects on televised production: "This year more than half of NBC's prime-time series are cops-and-robbers. When I went to work there, more than a quarter of the prime-time programs were westerns. Now there aren't any."<sup>3</sup>

One of the reasons for the continued existence of filmed adventure series, in spite of the success of videotaped series and television serials, is to be found in lead times: "Why two years ago? Well, the networks had to start their step deals (first comes the idea, then the treatment, then the script, etc.) for a September 1973 program, in mid-1972 or even earlier. In mid-1972, 'The Waltons' hadn't even had its premiere yet."<sup>4</sup>

As can be established from the literature on violence as an expression of dramatic conflict, the use of violence in the arts is not a recent phenomenon. What seems, rather, to be urged against television is its repeated, excessive, and gratuitous use of violence—gratuitous in the sense that it is essentially used as an effective dramatic recipe, but in an isolated and mechanical way, devoid of the symbolic value that should be found in a work of art.

To understand this fact, television and its dramatic production must be placed in their true context. An audiovisual instrument differing from film in its method of distribution, its way of recovering expenses, the kinds of controls that affect it, etc., television resembles film in the production methods it uses. Its technicians are indeed either trained in film or take their inspiration from it.

Other phenomena too have a direct influence on the programming offered to us on television. Among these should be emphasized the pre-established length of the programs, which last 30, 60, or 90 minutes. This concentration, which does not exist in literature, also applies to a lesser degree to the film and the theatre, since it is difficult to imagine a show lasting much more than three hours: "This concentration, which is indispensable to the narrative . . . leads, on the stage as on the screen, to a striving for effect; it gives major importance to movement and rhythm; it prescribes a very precise choice of significant moments in the action and a very discernable connection between them."<sup>5</sup>

In addition to being restricted to pre-established lengths, programs are subject to interruptions for commercials. Most of the criticism about the annoyance caused by these interruptions is directed toward programs that were not originally conceived for television, that is, feature films and plays. Interruptions in programs produced for television are probably less annoying in so far as these programs were conceived with such interruptions in mind. Often each part of the program is constructed as a separate episode, containing a denouement before the commercial break. This is a factor that is likely to increase the number of violent acts in a dramatic program, given the need to dramatically enliven each of the segments that make up the program.

These requirements of economic origin impose a pattern on production that is likely to introduce a degree of mechanization into the conception of programs. Such mechanization already has a place in various phases of the production process. Just as in film production, taping is not done according to the chronological order of the scenes, but is dictated by considerations of production requirements and cost effectiveness. This mechanization of production, which reflects the pressures created by television's voracious appetite,<sup>6</sup> appears to have reached its acme with what is commonly called the "Fedderson system" after an American producer: in order to increase productivity and lower costs, the idea was conceived of shooting in succession all the scenes of the episodes of a situation comedy series that are set in the same scenic location (kitchen, living room, etc.). A similar technique was used for other kinds of series:

On *Bonanza*, for example, the whole team will go out on location for just two or three weeks in a season to shoot miles of stock footage for twenty or more episodes. The Cartwright brothers will be filmed from all angles riding across plains, through gullies, up hills and across rivers; selected clips can then be inserted as appropriate in future episodes. To ensure continuity, the brothers always wear exactly the same clothes and ride the same horses year in, year out. If the story calls for one of them to be riding by a lake, a snippet of film shot perhaps two or three years earlier can be dug out, as their appearance is unchanged.<sup>7</sup>

It is clear that such considerations of a technical nature can only imprison creative people in a straitjacket. Moreover, if the production costs of television programs are taken into consideration and compared with those of feature films,<sup>8</sup> the problems that television craftsmen have to face are immediately apparent.

Just as the instruments influence the kind of production presented, so the acceptance gained by certain kinds of programs has an effect on the



design of the instruments. Since portable video cameras are used mainly for sports events and news-gathering, the new models are difficult to use for dramatic programs. Although they provide better technical quality, they are bulkier, the monitor is designed for news-gathering, and, on one model of camera, the intercom system consists of a loudspeaker.<sup>9</sup>

The introduction of a new visual technology automatically brings with it new kinds of pictures. These new pictures define a new perception of reality for us. Unfortunately, the massive acceptance of these new techniques may mean that they are preferred to other imaginative worlds, and that these worlds disappear, impoverishing rather than enriching the range of means of human expression:

The films from the silent era that I still look at with great pleasure and that still seem almost modern fall roughly into four groups: those based on the ancient art of pantomime (Chaplin); those based on cinematic tricks (Keystone Kops); those that recorded real life (Flaherty); and those that used a stylized imagery of theatre or poetic form ("Caligari"). Then there are two groups that I find very odd to look at today: "play films" [and] . . . the extraordinary development that took place in the Soviet Union. What happened with the advent of the first big technological change: sound? There is almost no pantomime any longer. . . . The old cinematic tricks no longer worked. In a modern chase sequence for example, the chase must be "realistic", largely because sound and dialogue impose real time upon film.<sup>10</sup>

This review of the factors that influence the programs shown on television, and consequently the degree of violent action, is intended only to be a rapid survey. Other texts in this book discuss other aspects, and show the complexity of broadcasting and the problems that arise when an overall understanding of broadcasting complexities must be acquired.



## Control and improvement

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**Summary:** Cultural products intended for mass consumption have traditionally been subject to attempts at various forms of social control or outright censorship. These attempts have always been controversial. Moreover, the considerable development of electronic means of production and diffusion in the last twenty years throws doubt on society's ability to control individual cases of cultural content deemed undesirable.

This section of the symposium was designed to elucidate some of the social and legal implications of various control mechanisms. It consisted of a formal presentation by John Lawrence, chief legal counsel of the CRTC, and a commentary by Dr. Hans Mohr, a commissioner with the Federal Law Reform Commission.

**Résumé:** Les produits culturels destinés à une consommation massive ont de tout temps été sujets à diverses tentatives de contrôle social ou de censure en bloc. Ces tentatives ont toujours été controversées. De plus, le développement important des moyens électroniques de production et de diffusion au cours des vingt dernières années ont mis en doute l'aptitude de la société à contrôler les cas particuliers lorsque le contenu culturel était jugé indésirable.

Cette partie du colloque était consacrée à l'examen de certaines des incidences sociales et juridiques des divers mécanismes de contrôle. Le travail a consisté en une présentation officielle par John Lawrence, avocat-conseil principal du C.R.T.C., et en un commentaire fait par M. Hans Mohr, commissaire de la Commission de réforme du droit du Canada.

### The legal and social implications of control mechanisms

#### John Lawrence

John Lawrence was general counsel for the Canadian Radio-Television Commission from 1971 to 1975. He was born in Kingston and attended Bishop's University, Quebec. He studied law at McGill University, receiving his B.C.L. in 1956. Mr Lawrence was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1975.

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My subject is the legal implications of control mechanisms. What I propose to do, if you will bear with me, is review the thought process I went through to arrive at my conclusions. I am going to pose questions and I am going to answer them, referring to certain cases, but I'll try to stay away from a very technical legal argument. I can't entirely avoid it because, after all, we're discussing a legal question. So: the question I pose is, what is the legal validity of laws or regulations purporting to limit or prohibit television violence?

Well, we have to ask what laws are, or could be, applicable. The courts, as in the recent CFRB case, an Ontario Court of Appeal case, and in the



even more recent Kellogg's case before the Quebec Court of Appeal, have again affirmed that broadcasting, including television transmissions, is a matter of federal jurisdiction. The courts have said that this jurisdiction extends to the intellectual content of transmissions and that it is exclusive. We are therefore dealing in this area with federal laws.

There are a number of federal laws relating to the content of broadcast programs, such as the Election Expenses Act and the Food and Drug Act. However, those laws of interest here are the 1968 Broadcasting Act, the Criminal Code, and the Canadian Bill of Rights.

How could the regulation of television violence be dealt with under the Broadcasting Act? The Act opens, as you are probably all aware, by stating in eleven paragraphs a comprehensive broadcasting policy for Canada. It then establishes the Canadian Radio-Television Commission to regulate and supervise all aspects of the Canadian broadcasting system, with a view to implementing that broadcasting policy.

The Commission has power to issue, amend, renew, suspend, and revoke broadcasting licences, as well as a power to affix conditions of licence which are related to the specific circumstances of licensees. Here, however, we are presumably searching for a generally applicable standard, one which would apply to all violence on television. Thus, we must look to the power of the Commission to make regulations.

Section 16 of the Act declares that in furtherance of its objects the Commission may make regulations respecting standards of programs, applicable to all persons holding broadcasting licences. Is a regulation limiting or prohibiting violence on television a regulation respecting standards of programs?

Well, what are "standards of programs"? I find this is a difficult term. If it means defining quality of programs, then, as the 1965 Report of the Committee on Broadcasting points out, "As to the regulation of program standards, we admit at once that quality cannot be legislated. It is possible to prohibit programs that disturb public order or offend against good taste and morals, but there is no guarantee that programs complying with such regulations will achieve a high level of quality."

It seems clear that a regulation such as Section 5.1(c) of the Television Regulations, which prohibits the broadcast of any obscene language or pictorial representation, is a regulation respecting standards of programs. The problem in this area of standards is to establish objective criteria. Obscenity is a good example: it is a term which has an ancient lineage,

and it has been recognized as a legitimate limitation on free speech, but the question is, what does it mean?

Now that's not the subject of the discussion here today, but to get an idea of the complexity of the issue, I refer you to Professor Tarnapolsky's discussion of it.<sup>1</sup> You will see there that the Supreme Court ruled that Lady Chatterley's lover is not obscene, by a decision of five judges to four. The court is the only method we have of deciding these things, but even to say that is to recognize that the issue is a very difficult one. Five to four, it's not obscene. It might just as easily have been five to four, obscene. Frankly, you're dealing with a subjective judgment, and as soon as you deal with subjective judgments you are into the whole freedom of speech question.

Without going into the problem of program standards, it would seem to me that if a regulation concerning obscenity is considered to be a regulation regarding standards of programs, then a regulation regarding violence would equally be considered to be so. In fact, the definition of "obscenity" in the Criminal Code states that sex linked with violence, if it is unduly exploited as a dominant characteristic of a publication, is obscene, and so violence is linked to sex there.

Fine. So, what is violence? The Criminal Code doesn't define it. If you draft a regulation prohibiting violence on television, can you, for instance, have an argument? You could utilize, it seems to me, a formulation based on the one concerning obscenity: undue exploitation of violence as a dominant characteristic of a production is prohibited. But with that kind of a definition, you will have to go to the Supreme Court to see who is going to win.

So, suppose you try to prohibit specific acts of violence. You're not much better off. Here I would like to refer to some materials that are in the background book and just briefly I'm going to refer to some actions dealt with by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America Code of 1934. These are very old and somewhat amusing today, but they do try to delineate the problem.

For instance, "the technique of murder must be presented in a way that will not inspire imitation." How could you put that in a regulation? "The use of liquor in American life, when not required by the plot or for proper characterization, will not be shown." Profanity under any circumstances is prohibited, including specific words, for instance: "alleycat (applied to a woman)," "finger (the)," "goose (in a vulgar sense)," "nuts (except when meaning crazy)"—you know, you've got to wonder how Lenny would have

done under that. Now, this is beautiful: "scenes of passion must be treated with an honest acknowledgement of human nature in its normal reactions. Many scenes cannot be presented without arousing dangerous emotions on the part of the immature, the young or the criminal classes."

A little more seriously, here is something from the NAB Television Code in the U.S.: "The use of horror for its own sake will be eliminated; the use of visual or aural effects which would shock or alarm the viewer, and the detailed presentation of brutality or physical agony by sight or by sound are not permissible." A regulation might well read, "The detailed presentation of brutality or physical agony by sight or by sound is prohibited." That is the sort of thing you get, if you had a regulation. So, what's "detailed"? What's "brutality"? What's "physical agony"?—"by sight or by sound"?

The CBC Code says this: "avoid excessive aggression, including all torture and sadistic beatings," and "avoid animals being hit, or cruelty to animals in any form." A regulation would read: "Cruelty to animals in any form shall not be depicted on television." And, finally, a regulation saying, "If in doubt, cut."

I'm not, by any means, denigrating these codes. I don't mean to in the slightest. What I'm trying to point out is that when you get to regulation, you are into something different. You have to be very precise, you have to be objective, because if you are not both precise and objective, you're subjecting the people who must follow that regulation to a jeopardy that they are not able to determine.

Another example: say you wish to prohibit scenes depicting murder. So you can fire a gun fifty times at a guy and if he is still alive when you pass on to the next scene, that's not murder because he didn't die. Then you say, "Well, alright, we'll have to prohibit attempted murder." So if you shoot once, you are outside the regulation. As you examine it, the problem gets complex; making any regulation will be very difficult. However, assuming you could overcome the difficulties, are there other aspects of the Broadcasting Act which are applicable. Section 3(c) states, "All persons licensed to carry on broadcasting undertakings have a responsibility for programs they broadcast but the right to freedom of expression . . . subject only to generally applicable statutes and regulations, is unquestioned." So it is clear that the broadcaster, not the regulatory agency or anyone else, is responsible for what he broadcasts.

I note just in passing that originally that legislation read that the broadcaster was "responsible for *the effects* of the programs" (my



emphasis) that they broadcast. There was an exchange in the Committee in Parliament between Judy LaMarsh and Don Jamieson: Jamieson stated that that phrase was too broad, how could a broadcaster be responsible for the death of a psychopath, for instance, as a result of what he broadcast? He couldn't know that effect. So the phrase was limited. But I think it's a very interesting historical note, in light of what we're discussing here today. The responsibility of a broadcaster under the Act does not detract from the right to freedom of expression, and that freedom of expression can only be limited by laws and regulations of general application. So, the next question is, is a regulation limiting or prohibiting violence, or violent acts, on television an infringement on the right to freedom of expression?

Now, I have noted the difficulties in drafting a regulation on violence, but I cannot conceive of any regulation which would not interfere with the artistic or editorial judgment of the artist, producer, director, or editor. The analogy is to obscenity—in fact, as noted above, violence linked to sex may in some cases be proscribed. I conclude that the freedom to express oneself on the subject of violence is protected by the right to freedom of expression.

Now that doesn't necessarily, under the Broadcasting Act, constitute an impediment to regulation because, as we have seen, the broadcaster's freedom of expression is expressly made subject by Section 3(c) to laws of general application. Thus, a broadcaster cannot infringe the laws relating to defamation or obscenity, for example, without risking prosecution. Under this section, any law applying to all broadcasters, even one relating to violent acts, would appear to be permissible, even if it infringes on the right to freedom of expression. So I would conclude that a regulation enacted by the Commission, limiting or prohibiting violence on television, in enforceable terms, and applicable to all broadcasters, would be valid under the Broadcasting Act—I hope the press doesn't go to the phones, because that's not the end of it, by any means.

We must now turn to the Canadian Bill of Rights. This Statute, in effect since 10 August 1960, declares that in Canada there have existed and shall continue to exist certain human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. Every Canadian law—that is every law passed by Parliament (including any regulation enacted under any such law)—shall, the Act says, unless Parliament expressly declares that such law shall operate notwithstanding the Bill of Rights, be so construed as not to abrogate, abridge, or infringe the fundamental rights and freedoms.

What rights and fundamental freedoms is the Bill of Rights dealing with? That question has come before the Supreme Court of Canada in two major cases, the Sunday Bowling Alley Case, as it is called, and the Drybones Case. As a result of these cases, it may be said that in order to determine the scope of the rights and freedoms which are safeguarded by the Bill of Rights, the *concept* of those rights and freedoms as it existed in 1960 must be examined. You cannot look only to the statutes or laws which were in force then, since, as the Bill says, they have to be interpreted in the light of the Bill of Rights. So, if a section of an act of Parliament which was enacted *before* the Bill of Rights in 1960 infringes on a human right or freedom as it was conceived of in 1960, then that section will be held invalid. It's a difficult argument to follow, but actually it's quite logical and makes a good deal of sense.

The conclusion to be drawn from the Supreme Court decisions is that the enlargement of the scope of the basic freedoms in the future is in doubt. If, for instance, through future human experience in the world we wish in Canada to say that there is an additional freedom which wasn't conceived of in 1960, it is doubtful whether the Bill of Rights would contain it, and you would probably have to amend the Bill of Rights to include it.

By the same token, and even more important for our discussion, an enlargement on the limitation on such freedoms is even more doubtful. The Bill of Rights itself is intended to be a bar to such enlargement and, as the Bill clearly states, if there is to be an abridgement of rights and fundamental freedoms, then it must be expressly declared by Parliament. The Broadcasting Act of 1968 is subject to the Bill of Rights and has to be interpreted in light of its provisions. Whatever regulatory power the Commission is given under the Act must, when it relates to freedom of expression, be construed with the Bill of Rights in mind, and that notwithstanding the language of Section 3(c) to which I referred before.

We concluded that a regulation limiting or prohibiting violence on television is an infringement of the right to freedom of expression. In order to determine whether that infringes the Bill of Rights you have to look to see what the concept of freedom of speech was in Canada in 1960, and what the limits are.

As Professor Tarnapolsky points out, the limits on free speech as recognized by our laws now and in 1960 are defamation, blasphemy, sedition, obscenity, and censorship. I will only deal here with obscenity and censorship since they are the only ones that have any application.

As regards censorship, it is clear that the CRTC has no power to censor

programs. If there was ever any doubt on that score, the judgment in the National Indian Brotherhood case must be considered to have dispelled it. As Justice Walsh said, "Reading the Act as a whole, and in particular the sections to which I have referred, I find it difficult to conclude that Parliament intended to, or did give the Commission the authority to act as a censor of programs to be broadcast or televised." I know of no other federal legislation creating a censorship which would be applicable in the circumstances.

Insofar as obscenity is concerned, I have already referred to the fact that there is a prohibition to publish any matter the dominant characteristic of which is the undue exploitation of sex and violence. That matter is deemed to be obscene. The definition of obscenity was added to the Criminal Code in 1959 just prior to the enactment of the Bill of Rights. Thus, violence and sex unduly exploited as a dominant characteristic of a work was a statutory limitation on the freedom of speech in 1960, and it could be concluded that it was a part of the concept of freedom of speech as such concept existed in 1960.

All of that is to say simply that a prosecution based on the undue exploitation of sex and violence as a dominant characteristic of a program could be sustained. However, on the other hand, it is clear that a similar prosecution, based on violence alone, would not succeed, since by definition it is sex *and* violence, not violence alone, that is obscene. While the limitation on certain aspects of sex and violence may be within the concept of freedom of expression as it existed in 1960, I am not aware of any evidence that a limitation or prohibition of violence alone was a part of that concept. In view of this, I do not consider that the courts could accept a limitation confined to violence alone as a valid abrogation, abridgement, or infringement of freedom of speech. That would seem to me to run directly contrary to the whole purpose and intent of the Bill of Rights. It flows from this that, in my view, any CRTC regulation purporting to limit or prohibit violence on television would be held to be invalid.

That doesn't end the story. There is a clear way to broaden the scope of the limitations on freedom of expression beyond those which existed in 1960, if, as a society we wish to do so. It is by the legislative action of the only body in our system of government to whom such a responsibility should be given—Parliament.<sup>2</sup>



## Media and controls

### J.W. Mohr

Dr. J.W. (Hans) Mohr is now a commissioner with the Law Reform Commission of Canada, on leave of absence from Osgoode Hall Law School and the Department of Sociology at York University. His main teaching and research has been in the area of criminology and social deviance. Before joining York University, he spent ten years with the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto and was also the head of the Social Pathology Research section at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry. His main work there dealt with research in sexual behavior and offences, homicide, and aggression.

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There is not only convention in TV drama, there is also convention for conferences of this kind. Although I know very little about the communications industry and many of the things that have been discussed here during the last two days, the convention that I have observed is nevertheless familiar to me. Let me sketch the scenario. The concerns at issue are first raised by humanists who are disturbed by what they observe but who are not sufficiently sure about their values to place their concerns squarely on this ground; they call on the social scientists to deliver the justification, to prove that what the humanists know is wrong is also harmful. Social scientists like to be taken seriously, to be needed, and to be instrumental; they try to deliver the goods but are quick to disclaim any responsibility for what is to be done. For instance, Professor Liebert, after an impressive presentation which left most people convinced that TV violence is harmful to children, made it quite clear that he is against any curtailment of freedom of speech.

The ball then moves to the practitioners, agents, and industrialists who claim that they are doing the best they can, but that money and competition is a problem. But, they claim, there are hopeful signs and things are really getting better anyway. They clearly do not want any controls either. Finally we come to the agent of control, the law-man, yet he, too, tends to be a liberal humanist in a forum such as this and Mr. Lawrence made it abundantly clear that with all the instrumentation in the law, checked and counter-checked into paralysis, there really was not much room for positive (or negative) expectations. So we turn to the reformer, and here I am. The ball has by now become a hot chestnut and I could still pass it on to Professor Frye for final summation and consummation. Before doing this, however, I would like to reflect on the subject of control and our expectations.

I have already mentioned that I know very little about the communications industry, and after what I have heard here, I think that the word *industry* is

an appropriate one. I have spent the last twenty years in another industry, the anti-crime industry. From the viewpoint of control, very similar features appear and I would like to see whether I can draw parallels, especially since the subject of crime seems to be central to both.

In the feedback I get from the crime and anti-crime industry, I see a dangerous confusion between violence in the media and violence in reality. There are very significant differences between fantasy violence and actual violence. The differences are so essential that any argument based on direct correlations between the two, such as in arguments about the effects of TV violence on the behavior of children, must be re-examined. Let me take as a basis for this re-examination the images of violence in the mind of students, patients, criminals, policemen, judges, and ordinary citizens which, over the years, I have identified as feedback from media fare.

For some time, until it got too repetitive and boring, I made it a point, before talking about violence to an audience, to ask for a description of the most common and typical case of murder, when it happened and where, who were the people involved and what was the situation. Unless there was somebody there who was aware of the actual facts, I was invariably given the most atypical situation and each parameter tended to be the polar opposite of those found in the majority of actual cases. They did, however, correspond to the majority of TV presentations. Ask yourself what image the word *murder* conjures up in your own mind—dark streets, alleys, warehouses, banks in the process of a crime, pure sadistic terrorizing, and so on. The analysis of murder cases, of course, shows that they most often take place in the cosy home, and even there in the cosiest places like kitchen and bedroom; it is not dark at all, but well lit; people are quite familiar with each other and even the murderer himself is not a professional sadist but often somebody who could not hurt a fly before this particular occasion.

The same holds true for the relationship between violence and sexual deviation—it is rare in reality, but was high on TV when our concern about sexual behavior, usually projected onto children, was in the foreground. It has now been largely traded in for a concern with drugs. I feel a bit like an historical animal since I have worked in the field of sexual deviation, and when, after years of work, results started to appear, concerns had already shifted to something else. I am glad to see that the same thing is happening now to researchers in the field of drugs. It may be a lesson to consider that those who actively brought delinquency into control are now called the “child savers” in a very pejorative way because they built their control measures largely on images rather than realities.

Let me attempt to summarize the comparison of actual and TV violence from four angles which may serve us then as perspectives for the question of control.

First, everybody maintains that we do not want violence. I take it this is true, at least on the surface, for actual violence. It certainly is not true for TV violence: if nothing else, the data presented here at this conference convince me that there is a strong demand for violence on TV. The same, it seems to me, holds for the marketing of films and written material. Is this not a jarring contradiction? What does it mean when most people claim that they hate violence but are eager to participate in it vicariously? What does it mean by itself, even before we raise the question of whether depicted violence contributes to actual violence? What is this public demand for depicted violence all about, where does it come from, why does it disturb us so that we hold conferences and talk about control?

The second dimension is that most actual violence is private and interpersonal, whereas TV violence is mainly public and impersonal. I have already indicated this in the case of murder, but it holds for all other forms of violence as well. Child-battering, assaults, and tormenting are matters not so much for strangers as loved ones. We do not want to talk about this, nor do we want to be faced with it, and hence the demand for the other violence. The TV screen becomes a screen in the sense of screening out what is real and what we do not want to see. This is true even for people who should know better, like police officers. My experience has been that they too, when talking about violence, tend to talk mainly about TV images until one pins them down to their own experience. On that level they know that family situations tend to be the most dangerous ones and in fact the majority of killings of policemen occur in marital-dispute situations, not in bank robberies and the pursuit of gangsters.

This raises the third point. Violence, as I have been told here, is very prevalent on TV but its actual expression in reality is a rare event for most Canadians. This does not prevent people from talking about the violence around them although they have in fact neither seen nor experienced it. If one presents this point, even to a large audience, one consistently finds that most people never had experience of any serious form of crime and yet they hold the belief that the society around them is crime-ridden. Where do they get this image—we know by now—and, what is more important, what does this image and concept do to their social relations and their behavior, their trust and mistrust of and their responses to others?



And this is my fourth and last point, and in some ways the most important perspective on the issue of control because the very quest for control of violence is based on its TV definition. It is no particular puzzle that we want to deal with inhuman things in an inhuman way; that we want to control external forces in an external way. The primary model for control is, of course, the criminal law. It is a big stick, but let me warn you that in human affairs this big stick is just a dildo. It helps in keeping up appearances of action, but is not very fruitful.

The word *code* has been used on several occasions at this conference, and it is only natural that if one looks for an instrument of control that one should think of a code of prohibitions. In my work we also have a code, the Criminal Code of Canada. It has a great number of prohibitions but they pale almost to insignificance when one finds, as we did in the Commission, that outside this Code there are a further 20,000 federal offences and in provincial statutes, for each province, roughly another 20,000 offences. And we seem to be adding more every day. So why not one for TV violence while inflation of values is rampant anyway?

But do codes control prohibited behavior? It is difficult today to believe they do. Why? Because we are not satisfied with codes which set out values, we want them to have teeth, which means sanctions, which means force and violence in a different form. And as soon as we have this force we have to build in protection against it which leads to the "sporting theory" of justice, which may lead to lucrative employment for lawyers and less lucrative occupations of inspectors, investigators, and other bureaucrats, but hardly to a resolution of the problem for which we have created these jobs in the first place. And we need definitions, which, as you can see in the case of obscenity, are hopeless once they enter the legal adversary process.

Let me clarify. I am not opposed to the kind of codes which Mr. Sinclair defended here earlier. But the discussion already showed up the problems. One group felt that such codes don't work anyway. (And both opinions may have been held by the same people.) But codes neither control nor work—or don't work. Codes are books with things written in them. What is important is the *process* of accusation and defence, if you are in the adversary mode, or a *process* which allows discussion, clarification, and accountability in a true sense, if you choose a non-adversary mode. In the television industry you can no longer look for the bad guys, only for bad things arising from the nature of the corporate enterprise, and it seems to me that you need a forum for examining the problem. Not even the president of a network will be able to control the presentation of violence, no more than the Prime Minister can control most

forms of actual violence in the country. The experience in the United States has clearly demonstrated that.

The feeling of impotence is all-pervasive. Why is this so? Mr. Kotcheff has given a vivid presentation of the production process and its machine-like quality. It is banal to say that this production process is dehumanizing but one begins to understand why the product tends to be depersonalized. The fact remains that responsibility and accountability can only be claimed from persons. It seems to me that this conference has shown that we do not know enough about the production process and its consequences and effects. I know that I do not, I am quite sure that the general public does not, and I suspect now that the insiders are not so sure about it either, since each one only has insight into a part of the system. One starts to realize that in spite of the tremendous impact of TV on society, the medium itself is really an enigma to most people. The medium here is not the message, but disappears behind the message; the medium is the hidden machinery of the magician who stuns us into believing a reality which has never been. It is obviously successful to the point of stupefaction and addiction, and I don't think control is possible unless more of the machinery is exposed.

To be more concrete, I believe that we need a forum in which the very nature of the medium is discussed. To be meaningful to a wider public, this cannot be done in the abstract; discussion must concentrate on program items and program distribution in the light of public concern. Here I do think that the CRTC has a role of providing such a forum and I hope that this conference is a beginning. I would also hope that a commission such as the one chaired by Judy LaMarsh in Ontario will work toward raising public awareness, and not so much toward legislation and expert research. In much of the expert presentations here and the discussions following, it was difficult to find a common ground. There were a number of concerned citizens here who had no expertise to offer, only their concerns, but I did not hear them speak. It is very intimidating to participate in a meeting which is directed by and for experts and their concerns. At the beginning of the conference there were some references by people to their own children until one of them was told that he was not invited as a father. Why not? To me a reference to one's own children provided a legitimization of first-hand knowledge and human experience.

If we have to apologize for the expression of direct human experience and if only the experts can speak on the basis of figures and data, then we have reached the ground of all violence: the extinction of humanness. And if this is so, then TV or this conference are only metaphors for the space

we are in. And then it seems to me that the call for state control is only a further symptom and metaphor, and not a cure and resolution.

In summary, the end and the outcome of this conference should not be the question of control. A beginning has been made in defining the problem, but barely a beginning in establishing the nature of our concerns. Coming to grips with more than stereotypes is always frustrating and there has been a good deal of frustration here. But it will not do to dissolve these tensions and frustrations with easy answers. These tensions and frustrations, let me suggest, have not been produced in the conference—they have only been discovered—and I for one would argue for further discovering and uncovering.

## **Discussion from the floor**

In the discussion that followed the session, several participants asked that Dr. Mohr clarify his approach to the question of control of media violence through personal accountability.

In answer to a question from Peter Trueman of Global Television news on what, if any, responsibility for crime and violence in society can be attributed to television as separate from other environmental factors, Dr. Mohr reemphasized that such separations were meaningless, and that “pointing the finger” could not replace examining individual responsibilities. As an example, he reminded Mr. Trueman of the way in which he had described news the previous day: “You had a lovely quote yesterday that ‘news is what one cannot wait to tell somebody,’ and I think many people were gripped by that. I would like to see this definition taken seriously and then reflectively, and ask ourselves why it is that certain things attract us, what are the things we want to tell somebody else? I think it becomes serious to examine why we want to talk to somebody else about a plane crash in Africa, and we don’t want to tell somebody else other things.”

Dr. Anthony Doob of the University of Toronto then attempted to answer Mr. Trueman’s original question more directly:

I would guess that violence on entertainment television causes less violence than does poverty, than do criminal institutions, than does alcohol. Those are probably more important kinds and causes of violence in society than anything that goes on in entertainment television. But I think the point here is that at least in theory what goes on television is manageable. We don’t know how to deal with poverty, we don’t know how to deal with people in criminal institutions, we don’t know what to do about alcohol, but in theory—in theory only—depending



on how totalitarian we want to be, we can do something about television.

## Summation

### Northrop Frye

Northrop Frye, internationally known as an author and scholar, has been a part-time member of the Canadian Radio-Television Commission since 1968; he is a professor at the University of Toronto, Victoria College. Dr. Frye is a graduate of Victoria College, and of Merton College, Oxford. An ordained United Church of Canada minister, Dr. Frye graduated in theology from Emmanuel College. He joined Victoria College in 1939 and was Principal of the College prior to his 1967 retirement. Dr. Frye's publications include *Fearful symmetry: A study of William Blake* (1947); *Anatomy of criticism* (1957); *The well-tempered critic* (1963); *The educated imagination* (1963); *T.S. Eliot* (1963); *Fables of identity* (1963); *A natural perspective* (1965); *The return of Eden* (1965); *Fools of time* (1967); *The modern century* (1967); *A study of English Romanticism* (1968); *The bush garden: Essays on the Canadian imagination* (1971); and *The secular scripture* (1976). Dr. Frye has lectured at over 100 universities here and abroad, and holds a variety of honorary degrees and awards, including the Canada Council Medal for distinguished contribution to Canadian literature.

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The problem of violence is a problem without boundaries, and it expands indefinitely into the human situation. Of other major problems confronting us, those of ecology, the energy crisis, the curtailing of natural resources, the exterminating of animal and plant species, are the result of inheriting several centuries of systematic violence against nature. As for human society, violence is built into that on various levels. Wherever there are great inequalities of wealth and privilege, there is at least indirect violence, and the tremendous productivity of the United States, the major part of the North American civilization to which we belong, has been built up by a social activity that has included slavery, lynchings, the bad men of the Wild West, free fights with eyes gouged out, beatings of union organizers, and the more carefully legalized violence of the "robber barons" who built up such immense fortunes, some of which have become charitable foundations subsidizing studies in violence. In an expanding society like nineteenth-century America, violence flourished on the social or economic frontier; as the continent became socially consolidated, much of this violence was forced underground and became increasingly anti-social. Apart from outright crime, which is now a business like any other, there are many activities which are still legal but are morally wrong. When a broadcaster and a sponsor conspire to produce a socially irresponsible program, that is in itself a violent situation, and has to be recognized as such. In Canada, where we began

with a military conquest and held down the north-west by a police force, most of the violence has been repressive, or law-and-order, violence. That is one reason why Canadian-produced television is quieter than American television, and why we take regulatory bodies like the CRTC so much for granted.

I am somewhat disturbed by the fact that the opposite of *violent* seems always to be *non-violent*, as though violence were a positive thing and we had nothing to put against it except a negation. Wherever there is one human being there is a very considerable output of mental and physical energy, and wherever there is more than one human being those energies are going to conflict. It seems to me that violence, as we have been using the word here, is misapplied energy: it is to energy what prostitution is to sexual love. As such, it really is a negative force, and controlling violence would be the way to set human energy free for its proper tasks.

Controlling violence means, first of all, raising the level of society. The people who produce and sell socially irresponsible programs are thinking of their viewers as a mob rather than a community. The mob is the lowest form of community: it is a completely homogeneous society organized for hatred, and will not remain a mob long unless it can find someone to beat up, or, failing that, something to smash. When a television program depicts someone being slowly beaten to death, the primary appeal is, "Look at this: isn't it fun?" As soon as anyone begins to object that this may be a wrong kind of fun, the violence is immediately rationalized, and turns self-righteous. All rationalized violence has much the same argument, the argument behind all fights on school playgrounds: he started it. That is, whenever violence is rationalized it is asserted to be counter-violence. Somebody else did something first, and we have to resist it. That is true of the violence of capital punishment; it is true of the violence of Palestinian terrorists. Fictional violence, however, may be rationalized more simply as a refusal to take a positive attitude in a violent world, that is, this is what we're all involved in, whether we like it or not—and so on. But the real reason, as Mr. Kotcheff remarked, is simply lack of imagination: depicting violence is easy, quick, and profitable. It is easy partly because violence is a mechanical form of human energy: so mechanical that it can even be quantified or classified as "heavy" or "light". As a mechanical cause producing a mechanical response, violence never accomplishes anything: the pendulum of aggression and counter-aggression simply goes on swinging all through history.

To discuss such a question seriously we have to get away from what I think of as the whodunit fallacy. Many people think they are being practical about social problems when they think they have located a cause. We

wouldn't have inflation if it weren't for the profit motive in making munitions; and so on. But every such located cause turns out eventually to be one more symptom of the problem, and not a cause at all. Mr. Garth Jowett's paper outlined a history of disapproval of popular arts as causes of a great number of social evils. First there were dime novels and penny dreadfuls; then there were movies, then comic books, and now television. One can always find some evidence for such arguments, but the evidence is seldom conclusive because of the "predisposed" element so often mentioned at this conference. Some people are always looking for something to trigger them to violence, and such stimuli are not hard to come by in any society. This is not an argument for dismissing the seriousness of the social effects of violent television programs, as so many of their producers say; it is merely an argument against regarding television violence as the cause of social violence. For as soon as a cause is thought to be located, the next step is "take it away; censor it; ban it." This would be a logical inference if the cause diagnosis were sound, but it isn't; there are too many causes. Censorship is itself a violent, or counter-violent, solution: it assumes that you've caught the real villain and are justified in doing what you like to him, which is precisely the fallacy of violence itself.

We should be careful, therefore, not to go the way of the past, when our forebears tried to cure alcoholism by the law of prohibition, or sexual excesses by censoring books. One can see in such measures vestiges of middle-class prejudice, and nervousness about what people might do without supervision. Prohibition was partly an attempt to impose a middle-class work ethic on the whole of society; prudery was partly a middle-class reaction to the fact that sex was something available to ordinary people, who really shouldn't be allowed to have it. Such measures turn what could otherwise be quite genuine problems into empty anxiety or pseudo-problems; they always focus on token anxiety symbols, like four-letter words, and they generally end in over-compensation. That is, after a generation of prohibition North American society has become as boozy a society as the world has ever seen, and after a century or so of the most frantic prudery about sex, it has become—well, you can finish that sentence for yourselves.

When newspapermen say that a democracy must have a free press, what they mean is "we want to run this paper ourselves." But behind that there may be a quite genuine belief that running the paper themselves would make for a freer society than external control would do, and the belief may well be right. In any case I sympathize with the low threshold against censorship demonstrated here: some of the liveliest moments of discussion came when someone on a panel would say "I am entirely opposed to



censorship and repressive legislation," and three people would jump up and say, "what do you mean by talking about censorship and repressive legislation?" But not many people are really defending censorship here: Mr. Lawrence says that the CRTC has no power to censor programs, and I for one would not stay on the Commission for ten minutes if I thought it was seeking such powers. Regulations are easy to pass, but equally easy to evade; Mr. Les Brown has reminded us of the vast industrial inertia bound up with the status quo, which can make any amount of regulation impotent. The only real justification for violence is self-defence, and of course society has a right to self-defence as well as the individual. But censorship and attempt at regulation are circular, following the dreary round of "how do we prevent the growing disrespect for law? Well, pass a law against it." One difficulty here is that the law ultimately can never catch the right people. Even a professional hired killer is less dangerous to society than the man who hires him, and the drug addict who murders in quest of a fix is still less dangerous than the man who controls the heroin supply.

There is really no way to circumvent the laborious, frustrating, illogical procedures of democracy. Producers of irresponsible programs, like producers of motor-cars which are death traps, will not improve what they are doing, so long as it is profitable, until they are forced to do so by the general pressure of society. Society as a whole includes all the regulatory agencies in government, religious groups, minority groups, groups of concerned citizens, and the people of integrity in the business itself. Any one of these may represent a very partial interest, but out of the whole conflict we get some sense of society as a structure, a society as far as it can get from the homogeneous mob. Something of that was beginning to emerge from the Pastore hearings, and I am seeing it emerging from this symposium as well.

At the same time, I think nearly everyone here feels that violence on television constitutes a genuine problem, and is not an anxiety or pseudo-problem. It may have some of the characteristics of anxiety problems: there is the same desire to protect the weakest members of the community, which means the children—fifty years ago it would have been women and children—and there is nervousness over the fact that we can't control access to a television set as we can to a public theatre. The authority of parents is all we have to depend on, and in many—perhaps most—North American households that is not good enough. But Mr. Liebert and others have, I think, convinced us that something much more tangible than anxiety is involved. It is always possible to say to a social scientist that there may be methodological errors in his research and that he should go back and do some more research, but that's only stalling:

the problem exists and it's here. As such, it is primarily an educational problem. By education I mean the structuring of experience that goes on every moment of our waking lives, not merely schooling, which is a very small, though certainly very central, part of education. Much of it, further, falls into my own area of literary education. No medium of communication can convey anything directly except sounds, verbal or musical, and images, and the communication of words is as important here as it is anywhere.

We have to start with the peculiar characteristics of television as a medium, and more particularly as a medium of education. In teaching children one element to be educated is the imagination, the creative and structuring part of the mind. In literature, the imagination is best taught and trained through oral instruction, that is, telling stories, through learning to read and through encouraging children to write and tell their own stories. The stories children themselves tell are often quite ferocious: the fairy tale that ends dispensing poetic justice on all sides is likely to be an adult concoction. But the ferocity doesn't matter so much when it's a part of imaginative development: it's something to watch, but not something to be unduly concerned about. Television, because it presents the visual image directly, is not the best medium for training the imagination: what it is best at is training sensory alertness. That is why it is so influential a medium, and why it so strongly suggests imitation, at least by children and sick or immature adults. Its power to inspire imitation is, of course, the main reason why we're all here. Again, partly because of the way it can enter our lives from within our own homes, the television image has an energy of impact beyond that of any other medium. One could say, and I think M. Basile did say, that television is inherently a violent medium, violent by the nature of its own form, apart altogether from its content.

The experience of life is a continuity, and news is essentially what breaks into that continuity. That is why so much news consists of disaster, and why all disaster is news. When news breaks into the continuity of life, it sets up a polarity, of safety against danger, security against threat. When the issues of the day become news, the simplest way to deal with them is to polarize them, break them into a for-and-against opposition, create adversary situations of the "hot seat" type, or assimilate controversy to the pattern of an election issue, where the conclusion is to vote for A or for B. Television, at least in communities where there is a round-the-clock supply of programs, is the most continuous medium in history, and forms a counter-world to experience, a world continuously polarized between good and bad, safety and disaster, peace and violence. Hence it is almost irresistibly easy for television to create melodramatic situations, with the good guys arrayed against the bad guys, and so presenting the illusion of

a world in a state of constant violence, even though actual life, as Mr. Mohr reminds us, sees violence only rarely. Such melodramas even enter the presentation of sports, whether the sporting event is phony, like the wrestling matches described by Mr. Kotcheff, or genuine, like hockey games.

Television emphasizes particularly the "human interest" or dramatic side of events and issues, that is, it puts actual events into dramatic forms. Somebody remarked in the discussion that we depend on the news media to structure the news, and that word *structure* is immensely important in this context. Once we get past the talking head in television, we are instantly in a world of drama, whether we are watching a hockey game or a race riot. I am not competent to enter the controversy over whether there is or is not such a thing as staged film, nor whether Daniel Boorstin is right in speaking of "pseudo-events," or events deliberately created by the news media themselves. I do not see in any case why such pseudo-events are not also real ones. What I do know is, first, that television illustrates, more vividly than any other medium, the fact that we participate in society dramatically more than we do conceptually; and, second, that on television the structuring of fact is very similar to the structuring of fiction, both falling into much the same dramatic conventions.

The educational problem I mentioned earlier resolves itself into one of turning the passive viewer into an active one, and this process should begin as early as possible in childhood. It was Gandhi who discovered that the most effective form of political violence was non-violence, because non-violent resistance forces the other side to exhibit violence. But the principle that passivity engenders violence can be applied in ways that would have horrified Gandhi. The passive viewer has to be increasingly stimulated: he gets bored or desensitized quickly, and so there must be a continual escalation of ferocity. Yet even so nothing is really going on, for him: nobody dies, nobody comes alive. The television set is a curiously ghostly medium: in our day, if we see ghosts or hear ghostly voices in the air, it means that somebody has left the television on. But the passive viewer's whole world is equally spectral: he cannot distinguish fact from fiction either on the screen or off it. He may see the most terrible event take place on the street before his eyes, but he will not lift a finger even to call the police. Nothing is really happening. This represents a central and frightening problem of violence in itself: a zombie existence in which violence emerges as a desperate effort at identity. Marshall McLuhan's phrase "the medium is the message" has been quoted so often, even at this conference, that it has lost all its meaning, if it ever had any. But another phrase of McLuhan's is much more concrete: he speaks of the



need for civil defence against media fallout, which exactly describes what I mean here.

In attempting to train children to become active viewers, of television as of the rest of life, our assumption has to be that there is no audience in modern society: we can't afford to have audiences any more. We're all on the stage: each of us has a role to learn and a part to play. One of the roots of this problem is the old gap between the highbrow and the lowbrow, the academic and the popular, the over-detached and the over-involved, and hypercritical and the uncritical. This gap is a socially morbid condition, and everything positive we are trying to do, about violence or any other problem, depends on outgrowing it. The electronic media can help us to outgrow it, I think, but we need other changes. I wish teachers of literature, starting with kindergarten, would understand that what confronts them is the student's whole verbal experience, and that everything we think of as literature is, in that experience, only the visible tip of an iceberg.

I was once talking to a Grade Eight teacher who had given his students the problem of studying the rhetorical devices in television advertising, examining the status symbols offered, distinguishing the flattery from the threats, and seeing what was being referred to in both. The effect on them was so shattering that he thought at first he was working with too young an age-group, but he soon realized that he had struck the level on which their verbal experience was really being affected. They were not too young: on the contrary, any child old enough to be affected by television advertising is also old enough to study its effect on himself. The next step is the study of convention. Literature is made up entirely of conventions. There are no unconventional writers; convention is something that we can never break with: we can only build on it. Mr. Kotcheff's description of the assembling of a "Mannix" show is an example of convention on the lowest level: the difference between that and *King Lear* is a vast difference in degree of subtlety and complexity, but it is not really a difference in kind. But, because fact and fiction are presented in much the same frameworks in television, we have also to study the conventions of news reporting and of the discussing of contemporary issues, along with advertising and the entertainment programs. I am not thinking of this as a debunking operation, designed to make the student feel hostile or superior to television: I simply want him to understand what is going on, as early in life as possible. But, of course, understanding what is going on would also liberate him from the sense of what one of the background papers issued by the Research Branch of the CRTC calls the "intrinsic authenticity" of the medium.

A small child knows that he can be hurt, mentally and physically; but it takes him much longer to understand that others can be hurt too, and that it matters whether they are or not. In all scenes of violence there is the choice of identifying either with the agent or with the victim of violence. The "natural" or easiest tendency is to identify with the agent: this is primarily what is wrong with the wrong kind of television program. The path of genuine education has to go through identification with the victim. In Christianity, as M. Côté remarked, the center of violence is the Crucifixion, and Christians are directed to focus their attention on a victim of mob violence. This would be equally true of Judaism, with its long and terrible history of anti-Semitism; it is also true of Classical culture. Plato's *Republic* is written around the question of why it is better to suffer than to inflict injustice. The focussing of interest on the victim is a common civilizing element in all our major cultural traditions.

In literature, the difference between identifying with the agent and with the victim provides a basis for distinguishing what are called melodrama and tragedy. In melodrama we are expected to take the "right" side, to applaud the hero and hiss the villain, it being much more clearly established in melodrama than it ever is in actual life which is which. Melodrama appeals to the element of mob violence in us, the self-righteous sense that we know the good guys from the bad guys, the "law and order" rationalizations that are growing so rapidly in society today, as the panic engendered by so much crime develops a vigilante complex among us. But it is significant that melodrama is something we don't take very seriously. Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* is a melodrama, and a very instructive one. In this play the villain kidnaps the hero's two sons, and says he will kill them unless the hero chops off his hand and sends it to him. The hero does so—on the stage, of course—but the villain doublecrosses him and kills the sons anyway. However, the hero gets his deposit back: the villain sends him his hand, along with his sons' two heads. Then there is the question of getting all this meat off the stage: the hero takes both heads in one hand by their hair, but finds he hasn't any other hand with which to carry his other hand, if you follow me, and so turns to the heroine, who carries it off in her mouth, because she has had both hands cut off and her tongue cut out in a previous caper. Finally the villain, who is black, is caught and sentenced to be buried alive up to his neck. His response is melodramatically most satisfactory: he wishes only that he had been able to do ten thousand more evil deeds.

If a member of Shakespeare's audience were to feel that all this was only a lot of masturbation, and wanted to see something that was for real, he could go over to Tyburn to watch the execution of the latest traitor. The traitor would be hanged, cut down while still conscious, disembowelled,

castrated, and finally torn to pieces by horses. The audience would think: what a very bad man to have done such a thing, and how protected and secure we should feel that all this is being done to him. When I speak of concern for the victim of violence I do not mean sentimentality; the punishment of criminals is doubtless an inescapable element of social life. What is wrong is the pleasure in the punishment, or in any act of violence whatever.

What we call tragedy in literature is usually an action in which an agent of violence becomes a victim of it. As a victim, we look at his fate with concern, though not always necessarily with sympathy: we may feel sorry for Romeo and Juliet, but our feelings about Macbeth are different. The audience of a tragedy accepts violence as a fact of life: we are not living in the Garden of Eden, and violence is one of the things that are always happening. When we see it happen, our view of it is detached, but not indifferent; concerned, but not weakly sentimental. This attitude of detached concern is what is meant in literature by catharsis. Catharsis does not mean working off aggressive feelings by watching violent television programs: it means that when we see violence, violent emotions are aroused in us, and that a fully mature response passes through and beyond these violent emotions, reaching a point at which we accept the reality of what is presented to us, but accept it with neither approval nor panic. This is the attitude, surely, that the active viewer should take to all the violence reflected on his television set.

At this point, perhaps, we may see what a profoundly civilizing force television could be, and potentially is. All new inventions are apt to come first as social headaches, and it takes a while before their real usefulness is understood. In my younger days, in the thirties of this century, I was often shocked and disgusted at the callousness with which intellectuals could rationalize or dismiss so many of the most horrifying events of our times, such as the great Stalin massacres and deportations, whenever such events did not happen to fit their political categories. Their infantilism was connected with their being entirely men of print: they never saw anything except lines of type on a page. But something of the real horror and evil of the Vietnam war did get on television, and the effect on public opinion was, on the whole, good in the sense that the American public came to hate the war, instead of becoming complacent about or inured to it. In a world like ours, horrifying things will happen practically every day from now into the foreseeable future. Newsmen in all media have a duty to report violence when it occurs; novelists and dramatists have a duty to present imaginative forms of it. For an audience of concerned, serious, active viewers, this is a part of reality, and we can fight violence in the



street with better courage and hope if the violence on the screen is on our side.

## **Allocution finale**

Le problème de la violence est un problème sans limite qui touche tous les aspects de la condition humaine. C'est ainsi que la plupart des grands problèmes que nous rencontrons aujourd'hui, tels que les déséquilibres écologiques, la raréfaction des ressources naturelles, l'extermination des espèces animales et végétales représentent l'héritage que plusieurs siècles de violence systématique contre la nature nous ont légué. Quant à la société humaine, la violence s'y installe à plusieurs niveaux. Partout où l'on trouve des inégalités considérables de richesses et de privilèges, nous sommes sûrs de trouver au moins des formes de violence indirectes. Et l'immense productivité des Etats-Unis, qui constitue le caractère le plus important de la civilisation nord-américaine à laquelle nous appartenons, tient à des formes d'exploitation qui favorisaient, entre autres, l'esclavage, le lynchage, les mauvais coups des hors-la-loi du Far-West, les bagarres générales où l'on risquait de perdre un oeil, les raclées données aux chefs syndicaux, sans oublier les formes de violence prudemment légales des "robber barons" qui leur permettaient de rafler d'immenses fortunes et de participer à la création d'institutions désintéressées qui peuvent aujourd'hui subventionner des études sur la violence. Dans une société en pleine expansion comme l'Amérique du dix-neuvième siècle, la violence s'est déployée sur toutes les frontières, qu'elles soient économiques ou sociales. Mais au fur et à mesure que les structures sociales du continent se consolidaient, une grande partie de cette violence a dû devenir clandestine et forcément de plus en plus anti-sociale. A part les formes de crime reconnues, souvent considérées comme des affaires commerciales comme les autres, beaucoup d'activités, bien que légales, sont moralement répréhensibles. Et lorsqu'un radiodiffuseur et un commanditaire s'entendent pour produire une émission dépourvue de toute responsabilité sociale, cela constitue en soi une situation violente et devrait être reconnu pour tel.

Au Canada, où notre histoire a commencé par une conquête militaire et continué avec un contrôle du nord-ouest assuré par un système policier, la forme dominante de la violence a été répressive. C'était une violence du type "law-and-order". Et c'est sans doute l'une des raisons pour lesquelles les émissions de télévision réalisées au Canada sont plus modérées que celles que nous proposent les chaînes américaines, et que nous considérons comme normale une agence de réglementation telle que le C.R.T.C.

Je suis souvent gêné, comme l'a été M. Tovell, que l'on considère que le contraire de "violence" soit toujours la "non-violence", comme si la violence était une entité positive et que nous ne puissions lui opposer qu'une négation. Partout où se trouve un être humain se trouve également une production considérable d'énergie mentale et physique; et dès qu'il y a plus d'un être humain, les énergies en présence commencent à s'opposer. Il me semble que la violence, dans le sens où nous l'avons utilisée ici, représente une forme d'énergie mal utilisée et qui, par rapport à l'énergie, joue le même rôle que la prostitution par rapport à l'amour sexuel. En tant que telle, c'est réellement une force négative. Et le vrai moyen de contrôler cette violence serait plutôt de laisser l'énergie humaine remplir librement son rôle. Contrôler la violence signifie, en tout premier lieu, qu'il faut élever le niveau de la société. Ceux qui produisent et vendent des programmes socialement irresponsables considèrent leurs auditoires plus comme une cohue que comme une communauté. La cohue est la forme la plus élémentaire de la communauté: c'est une société complètement homogène et organisée pour la haine, et qui ne peut demeurer longtemps dans cet état à moins qu'elle ne trouve quelqu'un à frapper, ou, faute de mieux, quelque chose à démolir. Quand une émission de télévision nous montre dans le détail un personnage battu à mort, ce que l'on veut provoquer est surtout une réaction élémentaire: "Regardez, comme c'est drôle!" Et dès que l'on commence à objecter qu'il s'agit peut-être là l'une forme de plaisir immorale, la violence est immédiatement rationalisée et tourne à l'auto-justification. Tous les cadrages rationnels de la violence reposent sur le même argument, celui que l'on retrouve derrière toutes les bagarres dans des cours d'école: "C'est lui qui a commencé". Chaque fois que l'on veut justifier la violence, elle est présentée comme une contre-violence. Quelqu'un d'autre a commencé et il fallait bien se défendre. C'est vrai dans le cas de la violence de la peine capitale, c'est vrai de la violence des terroristes Palestiniens. Par contre, dans le domaine de la fiction, la violence peut être comprise beaucoup plus simplement comme un refus de faire l'effort d'affirmer quelque chose à propos de ce monde violent, en concluant simplement qu'"on est pris avec ça, qu'on le veuille ou non". Mais, comme le faisait remarquer M. Kotcheff ce matin, la véritable raison est simplement un manque d'imagination: exploiter la violence est facile, rapide et rentable. C'est facile, en partie, parce que la violence est une forme mécanique de l'énergie humaine; tellement mécanique qu'on peut en mesurer l'intensité ou la classer selon qu'elle est "intense" ou "légère", comment le film d'hier soir tentait de le démontrer. En tant que cause mécanique ne produisant que des réponses mécaniques, la violence n'accomplit jamais rien: le pendule de l'agression promène simplement son balancier à travers toute l'histoire.

Pour discuter sérieusement de cette question, nous devons abandonner les modèles du roman policier et de sa recherche des coupables. Beaucoup de gens pensent se rendre utiles à propos des problèmes sociaux, quand ils croient avoir réussi à situer une des causes de ces problèmes. A les croire, nous n'aurions pas d'inflation sans les exigences excessives des syndicats, nous n'aurions pas de guerre sans les efforts des marchands de canons à la recherche de bonnes affaires, etc., etc. Mais chacune des causes repérées finit par apparaître comme un symptôme supplémentaire du problème, et pas du tout comme une cause. La communication de M. Garth Jowett a résumé pour nous l'histoire des origines de nombreux dangers sociaux. D'abord, il y a eu les romans à deux sous et les romans populaires d'épouvante, puis ce fut le tour des bandes dessinées, et maintenant, de la télévision. On peut toujours trouver des preuves pour appuyer ces sortes de thèses, mais ces preuves sont rarement concluantes à cause de l'importance possible de la prédisposition des individus, comme on l'a si souvent mentionné au cours de cette conférence. Il y a des gens qui sont toujours à la recherche de ce qui pourrait exalter leur capacité de violence et de tels stimuli ne sont pas difficiles à trouver dans n'importe quelle société. Il ne s'agit pas de minimiser l'importance des effets sociaux des émissions violentes à la télévision, comme tant de responsables de ces émissions tentent de le faire; mais plus simplement de faire comprendre que l'on ne devrait pas considérer la violence télévisée comme la cause de la violence sociale. Car dès que l'on pense avoir repéré une cause, l'étape suivante consiste toujours à s'écrier: "Enlevez-la! Censurez-la! Bannissez-la!" Ce serait une conclusion logique si le diagnostic était bon; mais il ne peut pas l'être: les causes sont trop nombreuses, et la censure constitue elle-même une solution de violence ou de contre-violence. Elle suppose que l'on a attrapé le véritable coupable et qu'il est justifié de lui faire subir ce qu'on veut, ce qui précisément constitue l'erreur fondamentale à propos de la violence.

Nous devrions donc faire attention à ne pas faire les mêmes erreurs que nos ancêtres en essayant de guérir l'alcoolisme par des lois sur la prohibition, ou de limiter les excès sexuels en censurant les livres. On retrouve dans de telles mesures des restes des préjugés de la classe moyenne et une certaine inquiétude à propos de ce que les gens peuvent faire quand ils sont laissés sans surveillance. Dans une certaine mesure, la prohibition était une tentative pour imposer une morale du travail propre aux classes moyennes à l'ensemble de la société. Quant à la pudibonderie, elle était partiellement une réaction de la classe moyenne au fait que les plaisirs de la chair étaient accessibles aux gens ordinaires, qui en réalité n'auraient pas dû y avoir droit. De telles mesures parviennent à faire de ce qui aurait dû rester de simples problèmes, des pseudo-problèmes ou des angoisses sans raison d'être. Ces dispositions se fixent



toujours sur des symboles d'anxiété d'usage courant, comme les gros mots, et tout cela finit généralement par des formes de sur-compensation. C'est ainsi qu'après une génération de prohibition, la société nord-américaine est devenue capable de nous offrir la plus belle collection de poivrots que le monde ait jamais vue et qu'après environ un siècle de la pruderie la plus effrénée à propos du sexe, elle est devenue . . . bon, vous pouvez terminer la phrase vous-même.

Quand les journalistes disent qu'une démocratie doit disposer d'une presse libre, ils veulent dire en réalité: "Nous voulons diriger le journal nous-mêmes." Par cette attitude, ils affirment une croyance sincère qu'en dirigeant le journal eux-mêmes, ils feront plus pour la liberté de la société que s'ils se soumettaient à un contrôle extérieur; et il se peut bien qu'ils aient raison. De toute façon, je suis en accord avec la susceptibilité aiguë à propos de la censure que l'assistance a démontrée ici: quelques-uns des moments de discussion les plus vivants ont été provoqués lorsqu'un participant à une table ronde disait: "Je suis absolument contre toute idée de censure ou de législation répressive", trois personnes ont sursauté en disant: "Comment pouvez-vous oser parler de censure et de lois de répression?" Personne ici n'a vraiment pris la défense de la censure. M. Lawrence nous a dit que le C.R.T.C. n'avait aucun pouvoir de censurer les émissions et, en ce qui me concerne, je ne resterais pas au Conseil dix minutes de plus si je pensais que cet organisme cherchait à acquérir un tel pouvoir. Les règlements sont assez faciles à promulguer mais également faciles à contourner; M. Les Brown nous a rappelé à quel point l'immense inertie industrielle est intimement liée à des formes de statu quo qui peuvent rendre toute réglementation sans effet. La seule justification valable de la violence est l'auto-défense et, naturellement, la société a, autant que l'individu, le droit d'exercer cette auto-défense. Mais la censure et les essais de réglementation suivent un cercle fastidieux. "Comment allons-nous prévenir un manque de respect croissant à propos des lois?"—"Eh bien, passons une nouvelle loi contre cet irrespect!" Cependant, une difficulté demeure: c'est que la loi ne peut jamais en fin de compte attraper les vrais coupables. Même un tueur à gages est moins dangereux pour notre société que celui qui l'emploie. Et le drogué qui tue pour se procurer sa dose est moins dangereux que celui qui contrôle la source de l'héroïne. Pour tout dire, il n'exite pas réellement de moyens de contourner le processus démocratique, aussi laborieux, frustrant et illogique qu'il soit. Les producteurs irresponsables d'émissions de télévision tout comme les fabricants de voitures qui sont des dangers mortels ne chercheront pas à améliorer ce qu'ils produisent aussi longtemps que leurs activités demeureront profitables, c'est-à-dire jusqu'à ce qu'ils soient forcés de le faire, à la suite d'une pression générale de la société elle-même. Dans son ensemble, la société comprend toutes

les agences de réglementation du gouvernement, les divers groupes religieux et minoritaires, les comités de citoyens conscients et les hommes intègres appartenant au milieu industriel de la télévision. Chacun de ces groupes peut ne représenter qu'un intérêt très partiel, mais de toute cette confrontation, nous pouvons tirer une idée de la société en tant que structure aussi éloignée que possible de la cohue homogène. Une telle idée a commencé à apparaître lors des audiences du sénateur Pastore et nous l'avons retrouvée émergeant des discussions de ce colloque.

Je pense que presque tout le monde ici s'accorde pour trouver que la violence à la télévision constitue un réel problème et non pas simplement un sujet d'angoisse ou un pseudo-problème. Il peut posséder quelques caractéristiques propres aux problèmes d'anxiété: notamment un désir commun de protéger les membres les plus faibles de la société, c'est-à-dire les enfants —il y a cinquante ans nous aurions dit les femmes et les enfants—et une certaine inquiétude devant le fait que l'on ne peut pas contrôler l'accès au poste de télévision aussi bien que nous pouvons le faire avec le cinéma. Nous ne pouvons compter que sur l'autorité des parents et, dans beaucoup de foyers nord-américains et peut-être même dans la plupart de ces foyers, cela ne suffit pas. M. Liebert et d'autres panelistes nous ont convaincus qu'en effet quelque chose de plus substantiel que l'angoisse était impliqué. Il est toujours possible de dire à un sociologue que quelques erreurs méthodologiques peuvent subsister dans sa recherche et qu'il devrait reprendre ses efforts et les pousser plus loin, mais cela ne serait qu'une dérobade. Le problème existe bel et bien. Et c'est même essentiellement un problème d'éducation. Par éducation, j'entends une structuration de l'expérience qui intervient à chaque moment de notre vie éveillée, et pas seulement lors de l'éducation scolaire qui ne constitue qu'une petite partie de l'éducation, encore qu'elle soit absolument centrale. En outre, cette structuration entre également dans ma spécialité: l'éducation littéraire. Aucun medium de communication ne peut transmettre directement autre chose que des sons, verbaux ou musicaux et des images; et la communication des mots est ici aussi importante qu'elle peut l'être dans n'importe quel autre cas.

Nous devons partir des caractéristiques de la télévision en tant que medium et, plus particulièrement, en tant que moyen d'éducation. Dans l'enseignement des enfants, l'une des fonctions qui doit être particulièrement éduquée est l'imagination, en tant que partie créative et formatrice de l'esprit. En littérature, l'imagination des enfants est mieux formée et entraînée à l'aide d'un enseignement oral; en leur racontant des histoires, en leur apprenant à lire et en les encourageant à écrire et à raconter leurs propres histoires. Les histoires que les enfants racontent par eux-mêmes

peuvent être assez féroces. Et les contes de fée qui se terminent arrosant tous les protagonistes d'une justice aussi équitable que poétique sont le plus souvent des fabrications d'adultes. En fait, la cruauté ne peut pas être aussi nocive lorsqu'elle joue un rôle dans le développement souhaitable de l'imagination: on doit la surveiller mais non s'en préoccuper inutilement. La télévision, parce qu'elle présente l'image visuelle d'une façon immédiate n'est pas le medium le plus adéquat pour former l'imagination: ce qu'elle fait le mieux, c'est d'encourager l'éveil sensoriel. C'est pourquoi ce medium a une aussi grande influence et pourquoi il entraîne si fortement à l'imitation, plus particulièrement les enfants et les adultes inadaptés ou manquant de maturité. Ce pouvoir de la télévision, d'entraîner à l'imitation, est naturellement la raison principale pour laquelle nous sommes réunis ici. C'est en partie à cause de la façon dont elle peut entrer dans notre vie, en pénétrant dans nos maisons, que l'image télévisée possède une force d'impact qui dépasse celui de tous les autres moyens de communication. On peut même affirmer, et je pense que M. Basile nous l'a bien dit, que la télévision était un medium violent, violent par sa nature et par les formes qu'ils proposent, indépendamment des contenus qu'il présente.

L'expérience de la vie se déroule dans une continuité et les nouvelles sont essentiellement ce qui brise cette continuité. C'est d'ailleurs pourquoi un si grand nombre de nouvelles nous présente des catastrophes et pourquoi n'importe quelle catastrophe est immédiatement considérée comme une nouvelle. Lorsque les nouvelles viennent briser la continuité de la vie, elles provoquent une sorte de polarité qui oppose le sentiment d'être à l'abri à celui du danger, l'impression de sécurité à celle des menaces. Quand les questions brûlantes deviennent des nouvelles, la façon la plus simple de traiter avec elles est de les polariser, de les diviser en deux partis du pour et du contre, de créer des positions ennemies, du type "sur la sellette", ou de faire entrer les disputes dans les modèles électoraux dont la conclusion est forcément de voter pour A ou pour B. La télévision, au moins dans les communautés qui bénéficient de programmes couvrant toute la journée, est le medium le plus continu de l'histoire, finissant par constituer une sorte de monde en soi qui s'oppose à celui de l'expérience, un monde continuellement polarisé entre le bien et le mal, la sécurité et la catastrophe, la paix et la violence. Par conséquent il devient irrésistible, pour la télévision, puisque cela lui est tellement facile, de créer des situations mélodramatiques avec des bons mobilisés contre des méchants, et de donner l'illusion d'un monde en état de violence permanente; bien que la vie réelle, comme M. Mohr nous l'a rappelé, ne rencontre la violence que rarement. Ce caractère mélodramatique se retrouve même dans les émissions sportives, et même si l'événement est totalement truqué, comme, par exemple, les parties de



lutte décrites par M. Kotcheff, ou les authentiques joutes de hockey auxquelles se référait M. Boyanowski.

La télévision renforce particulièrement les caractères de "human interest" ou la valeur dramatique des événements et des problèmes du jour; c'est-à-dire qu'elle met les événements actuels dans une forme dramatique. Quelqu'un (je n'ai pas pu saisir son nom) a remarqué au cours de la discussion que nous sommes dépendants des media d'information pour donner aux nouvelles une structure, et que le mot "structure" est très important dans ce cas.

A la télévision, une fois débarrassé des têtes des présentateurs et des commentateurs, nous tombons instantanément dans un monde dramatique, que nous assistions à un match de hockey ou à une émeute raciale. Je ne suis pas assez compétent pour entrer dans la controverse concernant l'existence ou la non-existence de films représentant des événements truqués. Je ne suis pas capable, non plus, de dire si Daniel Boorstein a raison quand il parle de "pseudo-événement" ou d'événements délibérément créés et lancés par les media d'information eux-mêmes. De toute façon, je ne vois pas pourquoi de tels "pseudo-événements" ne sont pas également réels. Ce que je sais, c'est que, d'abord, la télévision nous rappelle, avec plus de vivacité que n'importe quel autre moyen de communication, le fait que nous participons à la société beaucoup plus suivant des modes dramatiques que par des modes conceptuels; et ensuite, qu'à la télévision l'agencement des faits est très proche des constructions de la fiction, tous deux dépendant, pour la plus grande part, des mêmes conventions dramatiques.

Les problèmes d'éducation dont j'ai parlé plus tôt deviennent essentiellement un problème de transformation du téléspectateur passif en un téléspectateur actif et cette transformation devrait être engagée, si possible dès le plus jeune âge.

C'est Gandhi qui a découvert que la forme la plus efficace de violence politique était la non-violence parce que cette résistance non-violente oblige l'autre camp à faire preuve de violence. Mais ce principe, que la passivité engendre la violence, peut être mis en application suivant des modes qui auraient horrifié Gandhi. Le téléspectateur passif doit être stimulé d'une façon toujours accrue, car il devient vite ennuyé ou insensible, ce qui exige une progression continuelle dans la férocité. Cependant, pour lui, il ne se passe rien de réel: personne ne meurt, personne ne revient à la vie. L'appareil de télévision est un medium curieusement fantomatique: de nos jours, si nous voyons des apparitions ou entendons des voix, c'est certainement parce que quelqu'un a laissé

son poste de télévision ouvert. Mais c'est également la totalité de l'univers du téléspectateur passif qui est fantomatique, et celui-ci ne peut pas distinguer la réalité de la fiction, que ce soit sur l'écran de télévision ou en dehors du petit écran. Le téléspectateur passif peut voir les événements les plus terribles se dérouler sous ses yeux, en pleine rue, il ne lèvera même pas le petit doigt pour appeler la police. Rien n'arrive jamais vraiment. Tout ceci représente un problème capital et effrayant concernant la violence en soi, à propos de ces formes d'existence de zombie qui ne peuvent parvenir à affirmer leur identité que par des efforts désespérés, qui aboutissent à des gestes de violence. La formule de Marshall McLuhan "the medium is the message" a été si souvent citée, même à cette conférence, qu'elle a fini par perdre toute signification, si jamais elle en a eu une. Mais une autre phrase de McLuhan est beaucoup plus tangible, celle où il parle du besoin d'une protection civile contre les retombées des media, ce qui est exactement ce dont je veux parler.

En essayant d'apprendre aux enfants à regarder la télévision, tout comme le reste de la vie d'ailleurs, d'une façon active, nous partons du principe que notre société moderne ne comprend plus de spectateurs, que nous ne pouvons plus nous payer le luxe de disposer d'auditoires: nous sommes tous sur la scène maintenant. Chacun de nous a un texte à apprendre et un rôle à jouer. L'une des bases de ce problème se trouve dans le fossé traditionnel qui sépare les intellectuels des non-intellectuels, les universitaires des couches populaires, ceux qui planent de ceux qui sont engagés, les hypercritiques des indifférents. Cet écart est véritablement une condition socialement malsaine, et quelque effort positif que nous tentions à propos de la violence ou de n'importe quel autre problème, nous n'arriverons à rien si nous ne surmontons pas cette disparité regrettable. Les media électroniques peuvent nous aider, je pense, à dépasser cette situation, mais cela exige bien d'autres évolutions. Je souhaite que les professeurs de littérature, en commençant au niveau du jardin d'enfants, puissent comprendre que ce qu'ils ont à affronter c'est l'entière expérience verbale de l'élève et que ce que nous considérons comme la littérature ne constitue en fait, dans cette expérience vécue, que la petite pointe visible de l'iceberg.

Je discutais un jour avec un professeur de huitième année qui avait demandé à ses élèves d'étudier les procédés rhétoriques de la publicité télévisée, et d'examiner les symboles de type social proposés, en distinguant la flatterie de la menace, et en cherchant à voir sur quoi ces deux tentatives s'appuyaient. L'effet de ces questions a tellement troublé les jeunes participants que le professeur a pensé que le groupe auquel il s'adressait était trop jeune. Mais il a pu bientôt constater qu'il les avait

touchés en un point où leur expérience verbale personnelle était réellement atteinte. Ils n'étaient pas trop jeunes; au contraire, tout enfant assez âgé pour être touché par la publicité télévisée est également suffisamment âgé pour étudier ses effets sur lui-même. L'étape suivante, c'est l'étude des conventions. La littérature est entièrement faite de conventions. Il n'existe pas d'écrivain qui ne soit pas conventionnel. On ne peut pas échapper à la convention, on ne peut que bâtir en se fondant sur elle. La description que M. Kotcheff nous a faite du montage dramatique d'un épisode de l'émission "Mannix" est un exemple de convention à son plus bas niveau. La différence entre cette émission et *le Roi Lear* réside dans une immense différence de degré de subtilité et de complexité, mais pas dans une différence de nature. De plus, étant donné que la réalité et la fiction sont présentées à la télévision de la même façon, nous devons également étudier les conventions des émissions de nouvelles et de discussion des problèmes contemporains, de la même façon que la publicité et les émissions récréatives. Dans ma pensée, il ne s'agit pas là d'une opération de démystification destinée à ce que l'étudiant se sente hostile ou supérieur à la télévision; je veux simplement qu'il comprenne ce qui se passe, et cela aussitôt que possible dans le déroulement de sa vie. Naturellement, comprendre ce qui se passe, c'est aussi se libérer de cette impression que l'un des rapports publié par la Direction de la recherche du C.R.T.C. appelait le sentiment "d'authenticité intrinsèque" du medium.

Un jeune enfant sait qu'il peut être blessé, physiquement et mentalement, mais il lui faut beaucoup plus de temps pour comprendre que les autres peuvent également être blessés et que cela importe qu'ils le soient ou non. Dans toutes les scènes de violence un choix s'impose, entre l'agent et la victime de la violence. La tendance "naturelle", la plus facile, est de s'identifier à l'agent et c'est principalement ce qui est mauvais dans les types d'émissions les plus néfastes de la télévision. Une véritable éducation doit passer par le chemin de l'identification avec la victime. Dans le christianisme, comme l'a fait remarquer M. Côté, le thème central de la violence, c'est la crucifixion, et les chrétiens sont invités à concentrer leur attention sur la victime d'une foule violente. Ceci pourrait être également vrai du Judaïsme avec sa longue et terrible histoire d'anti-sémitisme, cela est également applicable à la culture classique. *La république* de Platon est entièrement centrée sur les raisons pour lesquelles il est préférable de souffrir que d'infliger une injustice. La concentration de l'attention sur la victime est un élément civilisateur qui est commun à toutes nos traditions culturelles les plus importantes.

En littérature, cette distinction entre l'identification à l'agent ou à la victime



de la violence sert à faire la différence entre le mélodrame et la tragédie. Dans le mélodrame, on est supposé se placer du "bon" côté, applaudir le héros et huer le méchant, puisque dans ce genre les traits du bon et du méchant sont beaucoup plus clairement dessinés qu'ils ne le sont jamais dans la vie normale. Le mélodrame fait appel à des tendances propres aux foules élémentaires et qui se trouvent en chacun de nous, à une certitude trop facilement établie à propos de ce qui distingue les justes des méchants, aux justifications systématiques du type "law-and-order" qui prennent tellement d'ampleur dans nos sociétés actuelles, au fur et à mesure que les paniques provoquées par l'accroissement du nombre des crimes finissent par rendre acceptable l'idée de milice. Mais d'autre part il est significatif que nous ne prenons pas le mélodrame très au sérieux. M. Sinclair faisait allusion au *Titus Andronicus* de Shakespeare. Cette pièce est un mélodrame et d'ailleurs une oeuvre extrêmement édifiante. On y voit un méchant kidnapper les deux fils du héros et lui faire savoir qu'ils seront tués à moins que le héros se coupe la main et la lui envoie. Le héros se mutile, sur scène évidemment, mais le méchant, décidé à se moquer de lui, tue ses enfants quand même. De toute façon, le héros rentre dans son bien: le méchant lui renvoie sa main en y joignant les têtes de ces deux fils. Le problème est maintenant d'enlever toute cette viande de la scène. Le héros saisit les deux têtes par les cheveux d'une main mais découvre qu'il n'a plus de main pour se saisir l'autre main, si vous me suivez. Pour ce faire, il se tourne vers l'héroïne qui transportera la main coupée dans sa bouche ayant eu, elle-même, les deux mains et la langue coupées dans un épisode précédent. Finalement, le méchant, qui est noir, est pris et condamné à être enterré vivant jusqu'au cou. Sa seule réaction à cet état des choses est extrêmement satisfaisante du point de vue mélodramatique: il proclame qu'il ne regrette simplement qu'une chose: ne pas avoir trouvé le moyen de faire dix mille fois plus de mal.

Du temps de Shakespeare, si un spectateur finissait par penser que toutes ces péripéties n'étaient que des recherches excitées et désirait voir quelque chose de solide, il pouvait toujours aller voir du côté de la prison de Tyburn et assister à l'exécution du dernier traître. Là le scélérat était pendu, dépecé vif, éventré, castré et finalement écartelé par quatre chevaux. L'auditoire pouvait penser dans ce cas: que cet homme a dû être méchant et que son crime a dû être considérable, et comme nous nous sentons protégés et tranquilles qu'on lui fasse subir des choses pareilles!

Quand je parle d'un intérêt pour la victime de la violence, ce n'est pas

pour inviter à la sentimentalité. La punition des criminels fait inévitablement partie de la vie sociale. Ce qui est répréhensible, c'est de tirer du plaisir d'une punition ou de n'importe quel acte de violence.

Ce que nous appelons tragédie en littérature, c'est habituellement une action dans laquelle l'agent de la violence en devient la victime. Nous considérons son sort de victime avec inquiétude, mais pas toujours avec sympathie. Nous pouvons avoir pitié de Roméo et Juliette et ne pas ressentir la même chose à propos de Macbeth. Le public d'une tragédie accepte la violence comme faisant partie de la vie: nous ne sommes plus dans le paradis terrestre et la violence est toujours un phénomène actuel. Quand nous voyons des actes de violence, nous pouvons en avoir une vue détachée mais pas indifférente, nous pouvons ressentir de l'inquiétude, mais non d'une façon faible et sentimentale. Cette attitude d'inquiétude distante constitue ce que nous appelons catharsis en littérature. La catharsis ne signifie pas une extériorisation de sentiments agressifs à l'occasion du visionnement d'émissions télévisées violentes: elle veut dire que lorsque nous voyons de la violence, des émotions non moins violentes s'éveillent en nous, et qu'une réponse pleinement adulte consisterait à passer à travers et au-delà de ces émotions pour atteindre un niveau auquel nous serions capables d'accepter la réalité de ce qui nous est présenté et de l'accepter sans l'approuver ni ressentir d'effollement. C'est sûrement cette attitude que le téléspectateur actif devrait prendre en face de toute violence présentée sur son appareil de télévision.

A ce point de mon exposé, nous pouvons peut-être mieux voir la force civilisatrice que la télévision pourrait être et même qu'elle est potentiellement. Toutes les nouvelles inventions apparaissent d'abord comme des problèmes sociaux et il faut un certain temps avant que leur véritable utilité soit comprise. Dans ma jeunesse, au cours des années trente de ce siècle, j'ai été souvent scandalisé et dégoûté par l'insensibilité avec laquelle les intellectuels pouvaient justifier ou ignorer tant d'événements tellement horribles de notre temps, tels que les grands massacres et les déportations ordonnés par Staline, chaque fois que ces événements ne cadraient pas avec leurs catégories politiques. Leur puérilité tenait au fait qu'ils étaient des hommes totalement voués à l'imprimé et qui ne connaissaient rien d'autre que des pages couvertes de caractères bien alignés.

Mais la télévision a finalement pu transmettre quelque chose de l'horreur et des souffrances réelles de la guerre du Vietnam, et l'effet sur l'opinion publique fut plutôt bénéfique, dans la mesure où le public américain, au lieu de devenir complaisant ou insensible à son sujet en est venu à haïr

cette guerre. Dans un monde comme le nôtre, des choses horribles arriveront à peu près tous les jours, aussi loin que nous puissions imaginer le futur. C'est le devoir de tous les journalistes de rendre compte de la violence quand elle éclate et c'est le devoir des romanciers et des dramaturges de présenter cette même violence d'une façon imaginative. Pour un public formé de téléspectateurs attentifs, sérieux et actifs, la violence fait partie de la réalité, et nous pouvons lutter contre la violence dans les rues avec plus de courage et de confiance si, comprenant mieux ce que signifie la violence sur le petit écran, nous savons qu'elle peut travailler pour nous et non pas seulement contre nous.



# Appendixes

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## Appendix 1

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## Appendix 4

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## Appendix 6

### Symposium on television violence: Guest list

Dr. Frank Adams psychiatrist Hamilton, Ontario	Ehor Boyanowski Department of Criminology, Simon Fraser University Burnaby, B.C.
Jean Basile critique, <i>Le Devoir</i> Montréal	Les Brown writer and critic, <i>New York Times</i> New York
Marlene Bilous Research assistant to James McGrath, M.P. Ottawa	Jean Campbell Director, Early and Basic Education, Alberta Educational Communications Corporation Edmonton
Denise Bombardier recherchiste, Société Radio- Canada Montréal	

Peter Campbell  
General Supervisor of Policy,  
Canadian Broadcasting  
Corporation  
Toronto

Murray Chercover  
President, CTV Television Network  
Toronto

Gabrielle Clerk  
Département de psychologie,  
Université de Montréal  
Montréal

Guy Côté  
cinéaste, Office National du Film  
Montréal

William Cunningham  
Vice-President and Director,  
Global News  
Toronto

Raymond David  
Vice-président et directeur général  
de la radiodiffusion française,  
Société Radio-Canada  
Montréal

Ralph Dent  
Department of Psychology  
University of Toronto

Pierre DesRoches  
Vice-président exécutif, Société  
Radio-Canada  
Ottawa

Anthony Doob  
Department of Psychology,  
University of Toronto  
Toronto

William Elliott  
CHAN-TV (Canadian Association  
of Broadcasters)  
Vancouver

Ralph Ellis  
Ralph C. Ellis Productions Ltd.  
Toronto

Doug Gale  
CHCH-TV (Canadian Association  
of Broadcasters)  
Hamilton

Roland Giguère  
Président, Télé-Metropole  
Montréal

Marvin Goldberg  
Faculty of Management Sciences,  
McGill University  
Montreal

Tom Gould  
Vice-President, News, Feature and  
Information Programming, CTV  
Television Network  
Toronto

Lee Hambleton  
CFCF-TV (Canadian Association of  
Broadcasters)  
Montreal

Peter Hay  
writer and publisher  
Fort Langley, BC

Roger Hébert  
Président, Association canadienne  
de la télévision par câble  
Ottawa

David Helwig  
Literary manager, TV Drama,  
Canadian Broadcasting  
Corporation  
Toronto

Denis Héroux  
Ciné Video  
Montréal

Bernard Hofley  
Assistant Deputy Minister,  
Department of the Solicitor  
General  
Ottawa

Garth Jowett  
Department of Communications  
Arts, University of Windsor  
Windsor

Ted Kotcheff  
film director  
Los Angeles, California

Jean-Paul Kirouac  
Chef de la présentation des  
Programmes-TV, Société Radio-  
Canada  
Montréal

Jean-Paul Ladouceur  
Réseau TVA  
Montréal

Arthur Laird  
Director of Research, Canadian  
Broadcasting Corporation  
Ottawa

Judy LaMarsh  
Chairman, Ontario Royal  
Commission on Violence in the  
Communications Industry  
Toronto

Jeanne Langford  
executive assistant, Ontario Royal  
Commission on Violence in the  
Communications Industry  
Toronto

Danielle Langlais  
rechercheuse, Association  
canadienne des Radiodiffuseurs  
Ottawa

André Lamy  
Président, Office National du Film  
Montréal

Robert Liebert  
Department of Psychology, State  
University of New York  
Stoney Brook, New York

Colin Low  
producer, National Film Board  
Montreal

Flora MacDonald  
Member of Parliament, Kingston  
and the Islands

Lynn MacDonald  
Social Policy and Programs  
Branch, Department of  
Communications  
Ottawa

Pat MacKay  
Canadian Conference on Children  
and Youth  
Toronto

Jim Mackenzie  
Director, Freedom Within the Law,  
Department of Justice  
Ottawa

Eli Mandel  
Professor of Humanities and  
English, York University  
Toronto

Kenneth Marchant  
Director of Research, Ontario  
Royal Commission on Violence in  
the Communications Industry  
Toronto

Rev. Des McCalmont  
Executive Producer, Religious  
Television Associates  
Toronto



James McGrath  
Member of Parliament, St. John's  
East

Ron Mitchell  
Vice-Chairman of Television,  
Canadian Association of  
Broadcasters  
Winnipeg

Hans Mohr  
Commissioner, Law Reform  
Commission  
Ottawa

Sylvia Moss  
Canadian Broadcasting  
Corporation  
Toronto

Knowlton Nash  
Director of Television, English  
Services Division, Canadian  
Broadcasting Corporation  
Toronto

Sydney Newman  
Special Advisor on Film,  
Department of Secretary of State  
Ottawa

Joan Nuffield  
Department of the Solicitor  
General  
Ottawa

Richmond Olson  
Consumers Association of Canada  
Ottawa

Robin Quinn  
Director, Government and Public  
Relations, Canadian Association of  
Broadcasters  
Ottawa

Bruce Raymond  
Bruce Raymond Associates  
Etobicoke, Ontario

Rick Salutin  
writer  
Toronto

Gilles S  n  cal  
r  alisateur, Soci  t   Radio-Canada  
Montr  al

Tony Shear  
writer  
Toronto

Lister Sinclair  
Vice-President, Program and  
Policy Development, Canadian  
Broadcasting Corporation  
Ottawa

Benjamin Singer  
Department of Sociology,  
University of Western Ontario  
London

Ken Sobol  
freelance writer and critic  
Toronto

Claude Sylvestre  
r  alisateur, Soci  t   Radio-Canada  
Montr  al

James Teevan  
Department of Sociology,  
University of Western Ontario  
London

Don Thompson  
producer, Ontario Educational  
Communications Authority  
Toronto

Vincent Tovell  
producer, Canadian Broadcasting  
Corporation  
Toronto

Bernard Trotter  
Head of Academic Planning,  
Queen's University  
Kingston

Peter Trueman  
managing editor, Global News  
Toronto

Kees Vanderhyden  
Directeur de la recherche, Radio-  
Québec  
Montréal

Joyce Watkins  
Chairperson, Canadian  
Broadcasting League  
Ottawa

Jane Welch  
University of Toronto  
Toronto

Conrad Winn  
Political Science Department,  
Carleton University  
Ottawa

Scott Young  
Commissioner, Ontario Royal  
Commission on Violence in the  
Communications Industry  
Toronto

## **Symposium Staff, CRTC**

William Young  
Director, Symposium on Television  
Violence

Allan Fraser  
special Symposium staff

Lucinda Ogilvie, special  
Symposium Staff

Michèle Baril, coordonnatrice  
spéciale

## **CRTC Research Branch staff**

André Martin  
Directeur, Direction de la  
recherche

Patrick Gossage, Associate  
Director (acting)

David Balcon, Broadcast Content  
Division

Gordon Galbraith, head, Social  
Communications Division

John Horvath, Social  
Communications Division

Janet Solberg, Social  
Communications Division

Mary Wilson, head, Institutional  
Development Division

## **CRTC Commissioners and staff attending**

Pierre Juneau  
Président/Chairman

John Hylton  
Commissioner

Pat Pearce  
Commissioner

Northrop Frye  
Commissioner

Rosalie Gower  
Commissioner

Jacques Hébert  
Conseiller

Pierre Billon, Secrétaire du Conseil

Germain Cadieux  
Directeur adjoint, Direction de la  
programmation

Geoff Gordon  
Director, Information Services

Ralph Hart, Special Advisor,  
Operations

John Lawrence Q.C., General  
Counsel

Peter MacDonald, Director,  
Broadcast Programs Branch

Michael Shoemaker, Executive  
Director, Policy, Planning and  
Analysis

Peter Francis, TV Chief, Broadcast  
Programs Branch

# Footnotes

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## CRTC background papers

### The news media function: depiction of reality

1. Anthony Smith, *The shadow in the cave, A study of the relationship between the broadcaster, his audience and the state* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), pp. 91-92.
2. Smith, pp. 92, 94.
3. Smith, pp.103-106.
4. William Bluem, introduction to *To kill a messenger: Television news and the real world*, by William Small (New York: Hastings House, 1970).
5. Robert K. Baker and Sandra J. Ball, *Mass media and violence*, vol. 2, *Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), pp. 33-34.
6. Baker and Ball, p. 36.
7. Smith, pp. 77-78.
8. Small, pp. 282-285.
9. Here, Small is borrowing from Daniel Boorstin's theory of the "pseudo-event"; see D.J. Boorstin, *The image—A guide to pseudo-events in America* (New York: Harper's Colophon Books, 1961).
10. Smith, p. 74.
11. Cited by Edward Jay Epstein in *News from nowhere: Television and the news* (New York: Random House, 1973), pp. 4,5,18,39.
12. Epstein, pp. 259-266.
13. Epstein, p. 42.
14. Epstein, pp. 14-15.
15. Epstein, pp. 174-175.
16. Smith, p. 75.
17. 17 April 1975, p. 493.
18. Arch Booth, 10 February 1975, p. 26.
19. Herbert I. Schiller, *The mind managers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), pp. 17,18.
20. Frank Adams, "Our media of violence," *Content*, March 1974.
21. Small, p. 89.
22. Small, p. 90.
23. See *Grierson on documentary*, edited with an introduction by Forsyth Hardy (London: Collins, 1946); and his presentation to the CRTC public



hearing on the CBC program "Air of Death" (held 18-20 November 1969) in the CRTC transcript of the hearing, at pp. 626-630.

24. Grierson, CRTC transcript, pp. 631-634 (cf. this reference from a speech by James Russell Wiggins, former editor of the *Washington Post*, cited by Small, p. 286: "It has been said that the camera does not lie, but the camera does lie. It is a notorious, compulsive, unashamed and mischievous liar").

25. Grierson, CRTC transcript, p. 643.

26. Murray Chercover, CRTC transcript, pp. 525-526.

27. Charles Templeton, CRTC transcript, pp. 556-557.

28. Chercover, CRTC transcript, p. 565.

29. Smith, p. 105.

30. Small, pp. 26-27.

31. Writing about the American newsreel in its heyday, in terms that are totally applicable to the 1970s, Martin Jackson observed that it "gave audiences football games, floods, bathing beauties and celebrities. The movie-goer of the 1930s would learn far more about John Dillinger or Miss America than about the Little Steel Strike or the Spanish Civil War" (from a review of *The American newsreel 1911-1967*, in the *New York Times Book Review*, 6 August 1972, p. 4, cited by Schiller, p. 31).

32. Gladys Engel and Kurt Lang, "Some pertinent questions on collective violence and the news media," *Journal of Social Issues* 28 (1972): 96-97.

33. Smith, p. 43.

34. Small, p. 284.

35. Baker and Ball, p. 36. Compare the Code of Broadcast News Ethics, Radio Television News Directors Association, below.

36. Baker and Ball, pp. 217-218.

37. From a report in the 4 March 1974 edition of *Le Devoir* (p. 5) concerning a UNESCO initiative to establish a universal code of ethics for the press.

38. *A free and responsible press* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1947), pp. 107-133.

## CODE OF BROADCAST NEWS ETHICS

### RADIO TELEVISION NEWS DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

The following code of broadcast news ethics was adopted 26 September 1970:

Recognizing the importance to a democracy of an informed public, the members of the Radio Television News Directors Association of Canada believe that the broadcasting of factual, objective, and timely news is the finest public service radio or television stations can perform.

To that end, they declare their acceptance of the standards of practice here set forth, and their solemn intent to honour them to the limits of their ability.

#### *Article one*

The primary purpose of broadcast newsmen is to inform the public of events of importance and appropriate interest in a manner that is accurate and comprehensive.

#### *Article two*

Broadcast news presentations shall be designed not only to offer timely and accurate information, but also to present it in the light of relevant circumstances that give it meaning and perspective.

This standard means that news reports, when clarity demands it, will be laid against pertinent factual background; that factors such as race, creed, nationality, or prior status will be reported only when they are relevant; that comment or subjective content will be properly identified; and that errors in fact will be promptly acknowledged and corrected.

#### *Article three*

Broadcast newsmen shall seek to select material for newscast solely on their evaluation of its merits as news.

This standard means that news will be selected on the criteria of significance. It excludes sensationalism or misleading emphasis in any efforts to influence news selection and presentation, whether from within the broadcasting industry or from without.

#### *Article four*

Broadcast newsmen shall at all times display humane respect for the dignity, privacy, and the well-being of persons with whom the news deals.

#### *Article five*

Broadcast newsmen shall govern their personal lives and such non-professional associations as may impinge on their professional activities in a manner that will protect them from conflict of interest, real or apparent.

#### *Article six*

Broadcast newsmen shall seek actively to present all news the knowledge of which will serve the public interest. They shall make constant effort to open doors closed to the reporting of public proceedings with tools appropriate to broadcasting, consistent with the public interest. They

acknowledge the newsman's ethic of protection of confidential information and sources, unless this would clearly and unmistakably defy the public interest.

#### *Article seven*

News directors recognize the responsibility borne by broadcasting to present informed analysis and comment or editorial opinion on public events and issues. They accept the responsibility for the presentation of such matters by individuals whose experience and judgement qualify them for it.

#### *Article eight*

Broadcast newsmen shall conduct themselves with dignity. They shall keep broadcast equipment as unobtrusive and silent as possible. Where facilities are inadequate, pool broadcasts should be arranged. Broadcast newsmen should attempt to prevent their presence and that of their equipment from distorting the character of importance of events—e.g. demonstrations, civil disorders, etc.

#### *Article nine*

In reporting matters that are or may be litigated, the newsman shall avoid practices which would tend to interfere with the right of an individual to a fair trial.

#### *Article ten*

This association shall actively censure and seek to prevent violations of these standards, and members shall actively encourage their observance by all newsmen whether of the Radio Television News Directors Association or not.

### CODE D'ETHIQUE PROFESSIONNELLE

### ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES DIRECTEURS D'INFORMATION EN RADIOTELEVISION

Le code d'éthique du journalisme en radiotélévision, énoncé ci-après, a été adopté le 26 septembre 1970.

Reconnaissant l'importance, en démocratie, d'un public informé, les membres de l'Association canadienne des directeurs d'information en radiotélévision croient que la diffusion de nouvelles objectives, conformes aux faits et opportunes, constitue le meilleur service que les postes de radio et de télévision peuvent rendre au public.

A cette fin, ils affirment leur acceptation des principes directeurs formulés ici et leur intention solennelle de les suivre jusqu'à la limite de leurs moyens.

#### *Article I*

Les journalistes de radiotélévision se proposent d'abord d'informer le public des événements importants et dignes d'intérêt, de façon précise et complète.

#### *Article II*

La présentation des nouvelles sera agencée non seulement de façon à offrir à temps une information exacte, mais sous le jour des circonstances qui en précisent le sens et la placent dans sa véritable perspective.

Ce principe signifie que si la clarté d'une nouvelle l'exige, il faut faire ressortir les faits pertinents qui seraient à son arrière-plan; que des éléments comme la race, la croyance, la nationalité ou les antécédents ne seront mentionnés que s'ils sont essentiels à la compréhension de la nouvelle; que tout commentaire ou note subjective seront identifiés comme tels; que toute erreur sera rapidement reconnue et rectifiée.

#### *Article III*

Le journaliste de radiotélévision s'efforcera de ne mettre à l'antenne que des nouvelles choisies selon leur valeur objective.

Ce principe signifie que les nouvelles seront choisies suivant le critère de leur portée. Il exclut le sensationnel ou toute insistance abusive en vue d'influencer le choix des informations ou le mode de leur présentation, que cette influence vienne de l'intérieur de l'entreprise ou de l'extérieur.

#### *Article IV*

Le journaliste de radiotélévision respectera en tout temps la dignité, l'intimité et le bien-être des personnes mises en vedette par l'actualité.

#### *Article V*

Le journaliste de radiotélévision se comportera dans sa vie privée et dans ses relations non-professionnelles d'une manière telle que son activité professionnelle sera à l'abri de tout conflit d'intérêt, réel ou apparent.

#### *Article VI*

Le journaliste de radiotélévision cherchera à faire connaître tous les faits pouvant servir le bien commun. Il s'efforcera constamment, en vue de l'intérêt public, de rendre accessible à son équipement professionnel, les lieux de délibérations publiques où cet équipement serait interdit. Il



reconnaît l'obligation du journaliste de sauvegarder ses sources et toute information donnée en confidence, à moins que l'intérêt public en soit clairement et sans aucun doute menacé.

#### *Article VII*

Les directeurs d'information reconnaissent que la radio et la télévision ont l'obligation de présenter, sur les questions et les événements d'intérêt public, des analyses expertes, des commentaires ou des opinions éditoriales. Ils acceptent en conséquence de confier ce rôle à des personnes qualifiées pour ces tâches par leur expérience et leur jugement.

#### *Article VIII*

Le journaliste de radiotélévision se conduit avec dignité. Il tient son équipement le plus silencieux et le moins encombrant possible. Lorsque les moyens de diffusion sont insuffisants, il cherche à partager ou faire partager les moyens disponibles. Les journalistes de radiotélévision agissent de façon à ce qu'eux-mêmes et leur équipement n'influencent en rien par leur seule présence la portée ou le caractère des événements, par exemple, les manifestations, les désordres, etc.

#### *Article IX*

Le journaliste traitant d'éléments litigieux ou susceptibles de l'être, évite toute pratique qui risquerait de priver quiconque d'un procès juste.

#### *Article X*

L'Association condamnera toute violation de ces principes et cherchera à prévenir leur violation; ses membres encourageront à respecter ces principes tous les journalistes, qu'ils soient membres ou non de l'Association canadienne des directeurs d'information en radiotélévision.

### **Criticizing television**

1. Benjamin DeMott, "The viewer's experience: Notes on TV criticism and public health," in *Television as a social force: new approaches to TV criticism* (New York: Praeger, 1975), p. 59.
2. *Anatomy of criticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 25.
3. *Blindness and insight: essays in the rhetoric of contemporary criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 107-110.
4. Richard Adler, "Understanding television: An overview of the medium as a social and cultural force," in *Television as a social force*, p. 27.
5. Adler, in *Television as a social force*, pp. 27, 42.
6. There is no longer a recognizable "author". The industrial structure of these entertainment media, in which technological conditions and financial

considerations are paramount, mean that the "critic is seldom commenting on the work of an individual or a cohesive group so much as on the upshot of a loosely connected series of independent decisions concerning distribution and scheduling." F.E. Sparshott suggests that there are three plausible alternatives for the (film) critic: "One is to confine his attention to non-commercial films. . . . A second critical line is to accept that most films are junk, to be greeted with silence or a dismissive gesture, but that any kind of interest or excellence may turn up in any sort of film . . . [or] to accept cinema as a demotic art and devise a critical system appropriate to such an art" ("Basic film aesthetics," in *Film theory and criticism: Introductory readings*, ed. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 229-230).

7. *Anatomy*, p. 13.

8. Wilbur Scott, *Five approaches of literary criticism* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 23-27, 247-252.

9. "Tradition and the individual talent," in *Selected prose*, edited by John Hayward (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1953), p. 24.

10. *Anatomy*, p. 348.

11. C.G. Jung, "Psychology and literature," in *Modern man in search of a soul*, trans. W.S. Bell and C.F. Baynes (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1933), p. 172.

12. *Anatomy*, pp. 16-17.

13. *Anatomy*, pp. 246-249.

14. *Anatomy*, pp. 147-150.

15. *Anatomy*, pp. 119-120.

16. Hugh Duncan, *Communication and social order* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1962), pp. 36-40, 45, 50, 431.

17. Duncan, pp. 110-112.

18. *Anatomy*, p. 46 and Paul Goodman, "Seating arrangements: An elementary lecture in fundamental planning," *RIBA Journal* 80 (February 1973): 71-76.

19. Ralph Stephenson and Jean R. Debrix, *The cinema as art* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 22, 37.

20. *Television as a social force*, p. 27, and *The cinema as art*, p. 32.

21. Violence has a long literary and theatrical tradition as a means of expressing the opposition between individuals that is the essence of dramatic conflict. See Appendix 3 for a short bibliographical listing of works treating violence as a dramatic convention. There are sections on the performing, written, and visual arts.

22. Michael J. Arlen, "The air: Waiting for the storyteller," *New Yorker*, 21 April 1975, pp. 105-111.

23. *Anatomy*, pp. 38-40.

24. *Sight and Sound* 21 (August-September 1951): 34-40.

25. *Anatomy*, p. 47.

26. Arlen, pp. 108-109.
27. *Television as a social force*, p. 6.
28. *Television as a social force*, p. 25.
29. Ben Metcalfe, "There's no such thing as television," *Vancouver Sun*, 31 May 1975, p. 6.
30. *Television as a social force*, pp. 42, 159-160.

### **Some themes in research on the effects of televised violence**

1. J.D. Halloran, "The effects of the media portrayal of violence and aggression," in *Media sociology*, ed. Jeremy Tunstall (London: Constable, 1970), pp. 314-321.
2. Halloran, *The effects of mass communication*, Working Paper No. 1, Television Research Committee (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1971).
3. S. Feshbach, "The stimulating versus cathartic effects of vicarious aggressive activity," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 63 (1961): 381-385.
4. Feshbach and R.D. Singer, *Television and aggression* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1971).
5. R.E. Goranson, "Media violence and aggressive behaviour: A review of the experimental research," in *Advances in experimental psychology*, ed. L. Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1971), pp. 1-31.
6. J.J. McIntyre and J.J. Teevan, "Television violence and deviant behavior," in *Television and adolescent aggressiveness*, vol. 3 of *Television and social behaviour*, eds. G.A. Comstock and E.A. Rubinstein (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972) pp. 129-256.
7. M.M. Lefkowitz et al., "Television violence and child aggression: A follow-up study," in *Television and adolescent aggressiveness*, pp. 35-135.
8. S. Schacter, "The interaction of cognitive and physiological determinants of emotional state," in *Advances in experimental social psychology*, vol. 1, ed. L. Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1964).
9. R.A. Baron, "Aggression as a function of ambient temperature and prior arousal," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 21 (1972): 183-189.
10. D. Zillman, A.H. Katcher, and B. Milavsky, "Excitation transfer from physical exercise to subsequent aggressive behavior," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 8 (1972): 247-259.
11. G.J. Hanneman, "Message uncertainty in television violence as a predictor of arousal and aggression: Some experiments," paper presented to the 57th Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association, San Francisco, 1971.
12. Schacter.

13. D.J. Bem, *Beliefs, attitudes and human affairs* (Belmont, California: Brooks-Cole, 1970).
14. L. Berkowitz, R. Corwin, and M. Heironinus, "Film violence and subsequent aggressive tendencies," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 27 (1963): 217-229.
15. P.H. Tannenbaum, "Studies in film and television-mediated arousal and aggression: A progress report," in *Television's effects: Further explorations*, vol. 5 of *Television and social behaviour*, ed. G.A. Comstock and E.A. Rubinstein (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), pp. 309-350.
16. D. Zillman, "Excitation transfer in communication—Mediated aggressive behavior," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 7 (July 1972): 419-434.
17. N. Littner, "A psychiatrist looks at television and violence," in *The popular arts in America*, ed. W.M. Hammel (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), pp. 176-192.
18. S. Berger, "Conditioning through vicarious instigation," *Psychological Review* 69 (1962): 405-456.
19. R. Lazarus, *Psychological stress and the coping process* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).
20. V.B. Kline, R.G. Croft, and S. Courier, "The desensitization of children to TV violence," in *Where do you draw the line*, ed. V.B. Kline (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1974), pp. 147-155.
21. J. Wolpe, *Psychotherapy by reciprocal inhibition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958).
22. A. Bandura, *Aggression: A social learning analysis* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973).
23. D.J. Hicks, "Imitation and retention of film-mediated aggressive peer and adult models," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 2 (1965): 97-100.
24. J.M. McLeod, C.K. Atkin, and S.H. Chaffee, "Adolescents, parents and television use: Adolescent self-report measures from Maryland and Wisconsin samples," *Television and adolescent aggressiveness*, pp. 173-239.
25. McIntyre and Teevan, pp. 383-435.
26. Lefkowitz et al., pp. 35-136.
27. O.N. Larsen, L.N. Gray, and J.G. Fortis, "Goals and goal-achievement methods in television content: Models for anomie?" *Sociological Inquiry* (Spring, 1963): 180-196.
28. G. Gerbner, "The television world of violence," in *Mass media and violence: A staff report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence*, eds. R.K. Baker and S.J. Ball (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), pp. 311-339.
29. A. Bandura, D. Ross, and S.A. Ross, "Vicarious reinforcement and



imitative learning," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67 (1963): 601-607.

30. National Association of Educational Broadcasters in testimony presented to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee to investigate juvenile delinquency, 1961, quoted in R.M. Liebert, J.M. Neale, and E.S. Davidson, eds., *The early window: Effects of television on children and youth* (Toronto: Pergamon Press, 1973), p. 23.

31. National Association for Better Radio and Television, *Crime on television: A survey report* (Los Angeles: the Association, 1964).

32. National Association for Better Radio and Television, quoted in L. Sabin, "Why I threw out my TV set," *Today's Health* (February 1972).

33. I.S. Shaw and D.S. Newell, *Violence on television* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972).

34. Gerbner, "Violence in television drama: Trends and symbolic functions," in *Media content and control*, vol. 1 of *Television and social behavior*, pp. 28-188.

35. Gerbner and L. Gross, *Violence profile no. 6* (University Park, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania, 1974).

36. Canadian Radio-Television Commission, Research Branch, "Violence on English-language television in a Canadian city during periods of high child viewing," p. 7.

37. J. Lyle and H.R. Hoffman, "Children's use of television and the other media," in *Television in day-to-day life: Patterns of use*, vol. 4 of *Television and social behavior* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), pp. 129-256.

38. McLeod, Atkin, and Chaffee, pp. 239-313.

39. Gerbner and Gross, pp. 41-42.

## **Notes sur l'influence des instruments et des modes de production sur les "genres" d'émissions**

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2. Flaherty et Taylor.

3. Paul L. Klein, "Why TV is having a crime wave," *TV Guide*, 12 janvier 1974.

4. Etienne Fuzelier, *Cinéma et littérature* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1964).

5. "A titre d'exemple, on peut prendre le cas de trois animateurs de 'talk-shows' produits au Québec; on constate que s'ils maintiennent pendant 3 ans leur production de 3 heures d'émissions quotidiennes à la radio et à la télévision, la durée de la production audio-visuelle de chacun d'eux équivaldra à la durée de toute la production cinématographique de

Warner Brothers pendant 50 années d'activités." Conseil de la Radio-Télévision Canadienne, *Rapport Annuel 1972-73* (Ottawa: CRTC, 1973).

6. Timothy Green, *The universal eye* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972).

7. "Aucun des budgets de ces 19 films n'a dépassé \$750,000. Abstraction faite de 5 films produits avec ces budgets de moins de \$100,000, le coût moyen des autres longs métrages produits avec l'aide de la Société se situe aux environs de \$447,000." Société de développement de l'industrie cinématographique canadienne, *Rapport Annuel 1973-74*.

8. Les Roworth, "The use of hand held video cameras in television broadcasting," *American Cinematographer*, September 1975.

9. Richard Leacock, "Technology and reality at the movies." *Technology Review*, February 1973.

### The legal and social implications of control mechanisms

1. Selected excerpts follow from "Political civil liberties and the Canadian Bill of Rights," Chapter 5 of Walter S. Tarnapolsky's *The Canadian Bill of Rights*, 2nd rev. ed. (Ottawa: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), pp. 168-217. This excerpt was reprinted in *Cases and materials on the control of television in Canada*, edited by Peter S. Grant for the Symposium on Television Violence (Ottawa: CRTC, 1975). This background book and other information material distributed at the symposium is listed as Appendix 5; most of these documents are available from the CRTC, Research Branch.

. . . .

We believe we have produced a definition which will be capable of application with speed and certainty, by providing a series of simple objective tests in addition to the somewhat vague subjective test which was the only one formerly available. The tests will be: does the publication complained of deal with sex, or sex and one or more of the other subjects named? If so, is this a dominant characteristic? Again, if so, does it exploit these subjects in an undue manner?

We have been careful in working out this definition not to produce a net so wide that it sweeps in borderline cases or cases about which there may be genuine differences of opinion. In our efforts we have deliberately stopped short of any attempt to outlaw publications concerning which there may be any contention that they have genuine literary, artistic or scientific merit. These works remain to be dealt with under the Hicklin definition, which is not superseded by the new statutory definition.<sup>112</sup>

112. *Hansard*, 1959, 5517.

Since 1959 the Supreme Court of Canada has considered the effect of s.159(8) twice only. However, the only detailed judgment available to date is that in *Brodie, Dansky and Rubin v. The Queen*.<sup>113</sup> The Court of Sessions of the Peace for the District of Montreal has declared that D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's lover* was obscene and, in accordance with the provisions of s. 150A (now s. 160) of the *Criminal code*, ordered confiscation of copies of it which were seized on the premises of the accused. An appeal to the Quebec Court of Queen's Bench, Appeal Side, was dismissed. The accused then appealed, with leave, to the Supreme Court of Canada. The decision of the Supreme Court can be summarized as follows:

(i) Five of the nine justices (Cartwright, Abbott, Martland, Judson and Ritchie JJ.) held that the book was not obscene within the definition of s. 159(8), and allowed the appeal. The dissenting judges were Kerwin C.J.C., and Taschereau, Locke and Fauteux JJ.

(ii) Five of the nine (Kerwin C.J.C., and Taschereau, Abbott, Martland, Judson, JJ.) held that subs. (8) superseded the Hicklin test, but Taschereau J. went on to state that it was unnecessary to decide whether the definition in s. 159 (8) was exhaustive. Of the remaining four, Fauteux J. was the only one to hold that although subs. (8) expanded the definition of obscenity, it was not exhaustive and it did not exclude the Hicklin test. Ritchie J. did not say that the Hicklin test was superseded, but he did state that he did not think that subs. (8) was exhaustive. Locke J. did not feel called upon to comment beyond saying that the book was obscene under s. 159 (8), while Cartwright J. assumed, without deciding the point, that subs. (8) was exhaustive.

(iii) Of the whole court, only Fauteux J. asserted that evidence as to literary merit should be excluded. Ritchie J., who was the only other member of the court to declare specifically that subs. (8) was not exhaustive, did assert that evidence as to the literary merit of the work was admissible. Also holding that such evidence was admissible were Kerwin C.J.C. and Abbott and Judson JJ. Locke and Cartwright JJ. made no comment on this point, although Cartwright J. did state that he agreed with Judson J.'s reasons for concluding that the book was not obscene. He might have, thereby, assented to the admission of the evidence of literary experts as to the merit of the work. Taschereau J. stated that too much weight had been attached to the expert evidence, but he was not deciding on its admissibility.

113. (1962) S.C.R. 681. At the time it was s. 150.

Thus, a majority of the Supreme Court, which varied as to individuals on each particular point, held: a) that the book was not obscene within the definition of s. 159 (8), in that undue exploitation of sex was not a dominant characteristic of it, b) that the Hicklin test was superseded by subs. (8) and, c) that expert evidence as to the literary merit of the work was admissible.

Although a careful reading of the judgments in the *Brodie* case indicates the conclusions summarized in the preceding paragraph, a subsequent decision of the Supreme Court seemed to indicate that there was still some doubt as to whether the Hicklin test was to apply in defining obscenity. In *Dominion News & Gifts v. The Queen*<sup>114</sup> the Supreme Court unanimously affirmed the dissenting judgment of Freedman J.A. of the Manitoba Court of Appeal<sup>115</sup> in the following terms: "We wish to adopt (the reasons of Freedman, J.A.) in their entirety and do not find it necessary to add anything to them." The courts were concerned in this case with the magazines "Escapade" and "Dude." Counsel had agreed that s. 159 (8) was exhaustive, and the Court of Appeal accepted that construction for this appeal, but expressly reserved the question for future decision. Applying the test as they saw it in s. 159 (8), four<sup>116</sup> of the five members of the Court of Appeal found the magazines in question to be obscene. Freedman J.A. applied the same test and dissented. All members of the Court of Appeal stated that the *Brodie* decision left open the question whether s. 159 (8) was exhaustive and whether it superseded the Hicklin test. Even if all of them had not so concluded, Freedman J.A. did, and the Supreme Court expressly affirmed his decision.

In a subsequent case, *Regina v. Coles Co. Ltd.*,<sup>117</sup> the Ontario Court of Appeal dealt with the book *Fanny Hill*. Three of the five members of the court held that the book was not obscene while the other two thought it was, even though all members of the court applied s. 159 (8) without reference to the Hicklin test. Further, although both the majority<sup>118</sup> and the minority<sup>119</sup> agreed that the *Brodie* case had not decided the question of the continued application of the Hicklin test, they assumed it no longer applied. Regardless of what the members of the Supreme Court said in the *Brodie* case about the present status of the Hicklin test, since the mid-1960s a number of decisions have assumed that s. 159 (8) is exhaustive and that the Hicklin test was superseded. Thus, the Ontario Court of Appeal so stated in *Regina v. Cameron*,<sup>120</sup> and the Supreme Court of

114. (1964) S.C.R. 251.

115. (1963) 42 W.W.R. 65ff.

116. Miller C.J.M., and Guy, Monnin and Schultz JJ.A.

117. (1964) 49 D.L.R. (2d) 34. See the comment by S.N. Lederman in (1966) 24 *U. of T. Faculty of Law Review* 106.

118. Porter C.J.O., with Gibson and MacKay JJ.A. concurring.

119. Roach J.A., McLennan J.A. concurring.

120. (1966) 58 D.L.R. (2nd) 486.



Canada dismissed an appeal from that decision.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, the Manitoba Court of Appeal in two decisions in 1970,<sup>122</sup> although concerned more with how to assess "community standards" as a test of "undue" exploitation, seemed to assume that s. 159 (8) was exhaustive.

2. For information on applicable American practice, see the NAB Television Code. See also the FCC's *Report on the broadcast of violent, indecent and obscene material* (Washington, D.C.: FCC, 1975), pp. 418-444. Information on British practice is available in Joseph Weltman's "The independent television code on violence and the control of violence in programmes," *EBU Review* 24 (May 1973): 28-34.

121. (1967) 62 D.L.R. (2nd) 328.

122. *Regina v. Great West News Ltd. et al* (1970) 72 W.W.R. 1 C.C.C. (2nd) 251. See the comment on these cases by C.S. Barnett in (1969) 12 *Crim. L.Q.* 357.





Canadian Radio-television and  
Telecommunications Commission

Conseil de la radiodiffusion et des  
télécommunications canadiennes

In August 1975 in a unique forum, representatives of the television industry, writers, social science scholars, legal and lay experts came together to consider one of North American television's most persistent and contentious problems: televised violence. An extraordinary range of diverse positions and analyses were represented and interspersed with a comprehensive background review of scholarly studies on the subject. These studies, conflicting opinions, and areas of agreement make a fascinating compendium of views and insights into television violence.

Au mois d'août 1975, des représentants de l'industrie de la radiodiffusion, des auteurs, des sociologues, des juristes et des spécialistes de diverses disciplines se sont rencontrés dans le but d'échanger leurs idées sur un des problèmes les plus persistants et les plus discutés de la télévision nord-américaine: la violence télévisée. Une gamme imposante de positions et d'analyses fut présentée. De plus, le colloque donna lieu à une revue exhaustive des diverses études académiques déjà publiées. Ces études, ces opinions, concordantes ou opposées, forment un recueil fascinant de la perception de problème de la violence à la télévision.











